DARK CITY

by
Alex Proyas

REVISED DRAFT
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66 Myrtle Street,
Chippendale, Sydney, Australia 2008
Ph. (02) 318 0177

DARKNESS

A LOW RUMBLE increases in volume.

FADE UP:

A BLACK-GLOVED HAND wraps around a bulky electrical lever, thrusts FORWARD.

SNAP! - Electricity arcs through darkness.

O.S. sound of MACHINERY turning ON.

TITLES OVER

MONTAGE OF CLOCKS starting - various. Second hands turn - TICKING gets louder.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

SHADOWS DANCE. A bare bulb swings from the ceiling revealing: clothes on a chair, puddles of water on the floor...

SLEEPING EYES in and out of darkness. The eyes open. Confusion.

WIDEN ANGLE ON JONATHAN WHITE - a man in his early thirties, dark featured.

He sits up. Water splashes. He's in a tub of long cold water. His neck aches like he's been sleeping forever.

He looks down into the murky water around him. A feint movement beneath the surface, something swimming - A SMALL DARK SHAPE. Startled, he leaps from the bath.

ANGLE - THE SWINGING LIGHT-BULB. The man's hand reaches up, stops the light-bulb mid swing.

He steps to a circular window. The glass is cracked, covered in grime. He wipes it, this only smears the dirt.

It's dark out there.

EXT. BUILDING - NIGHT

ANGLE ON WHITE - from outside the window, through blurry glass.

A RAPID FLYING P.O.V. PULLS BACK in silence. The window is a SPECK on the side of a vast grey tower.

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BACK IN THE BATHROOM

White shivers, cold. He stares down at the puddle he drips on the floor. He looks at his feet and legs, covered with numerous SMALL BITES. He dries the bloody wounds with a towel.

He picks up the clothes lying on the chair, puts them on. Loose trousers with braces, a plain shirt, leather shoes with HOLES in both soles. In his trouser pocket he finds a key -a room number on a plastic tag.

He hears splashing in the bath-tub. He steps over, looks into the murky water. Suddenly a SMALL SILVER FISH leaps from the water, lands at his feet, panting heavily and flapping about.

He leans down, picks the fish up, throws it back into the water.

Like a blind man, he feels the walls, comes to a door in the shadows. He hears something on the other side, hesitates, hand inches from the doorknob. He leans down.

TIGHT ON HIS EYE

Blinking through the key-hole.

P.O.V. OF AN EMPTY ROOM - A glimpse of motion - the door across the room (leading to a corridor?) is shutting.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

WHITE pushes the door open, steps into the adjoining room.

No sign of life. Cheap decorations. He walks around cautiously. Turns lights on. Then reconsiders. Turns them off again. Disturbed, he studies his features in a wall mirror.

ANGLE ON OPEN BATHROOM DOOR - the fish has jumped from the tub again and is flapping on the floor.

White steps back into the bathroom. He picks up the fish again, doesn't know what to do with it, so he puts it in his pocket.

BACK IN THE OTHER ROOM

He searches through things. A grey overcoat in the closet. He goes through the pockets, finds a WALLET. No I.D., just a laundry bill, some money and a postcard from a sea-side town.

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ANGLE ON A REVOLVER on the bed-side table. He picks it up, his grip tightens on the handle, his finger applies pressure to the trigger and...

BANG!

The gun goes off. A BULLET RICOCHETS wildly around the room, bounces off the metal bed-head, smashes a vase, embeds itself in the wall.

Startled, he holds the gun away from him like it might go off again. He examines it carefully now. Opens the chamber.

TIGHT ON THE GUN - Five bullets left.

He turns the chamber carefully, shuts it, puts the gun in the inside pocket of the coat.

He moves to the bed. A RIPPED PHOTOGRAPH on the rug. A fragment of a woman's face, her left eye. He lifts the fragment up. There's handwriting on the back, part of a note:

> ...MEANS THE MOST TO ME. LOVE YOU
> FOREVER. - E...

The rest is missing.

He sits on the edge of the bed. As he does this, he notices something else on the floor.

HIS P.O.V. - follows a dark stain on the floorboards, to a woman's bare foot behind the bed. He stands abruptly, fumbles across the bed to stare into a dark corner of the room.

In the shadows he can make out a woman's naked BODY lying in a pool of blood. Her eyes stare lifeless.

White stumbles back in horror, throws his hands across his mouth.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

White stumbles from the room, leans against a wall for support.

Lights flicker.

At the end of the corridor, elevator doors open. Light and musak flood out.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

White staggers from the elevator, moves past a deserted front desk. A VOICE from the back room:

HOTEL MANAGER O.S.
Hey, you! You gotta message.

White stops, looks uncertainly towards a bead curtain.

WHITE
What?

MANAGER O.S.
Message in d'box! You deaf?

White sees several nooks for messages and keys in front of him. Reaching across the desk, he glances through the bead curtain into the manager's office. TELEVISION SOUNDS O.S.

HIS P.O.V.

Hard to see - the man sits in the chair, lit by the glow of the T.V. set. White grabs the note, looks at it. A PHONE NUMBER, also his room number, and what appears to be his name: JONATHAN WHITE. That's all. White thrusts the message in his pocket.

MANAGER O.S.
Got my money?

WHITE
What? I... How long have I been here?

MANAGER O.S.
Jeez, too damn long if you ask me! What about the two weeks y'owe me...

Totally confused, White turns to leave, sees something. Stops.

HIS P.O.V. - A painting on a wall (cheap print variety) - waves on a beach. A breeze rustles the pages of a calender, pinned beside the picture.

TIGHT ON WHITE - MOVE IN on his ear. O.S. SOUND - surf crashes on shore. A WOMAN'S VOICE WHISPERS:

VOICE O.S.
What is your name... What is your name...

He backs away from the painting, looks about the lobby in panic -sees a sign: TOILETS. A painted hand points the way.

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MANAGER O.S.
Hey!

WHITE (without turning)
I'll be back later.

MANAGER O.S.
Yeah. Well, y'better be.

CAMERA REVEALS A FIGURE - watching from a shadowy corner of the lobby.

As White runs out, the MYSTERY MAN picks up a pay-phone, dials. Whispers into the receiver in a foreign language.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

White pushes shakily through a red door, runs down a corridor. Pipes steam and drip water. He rounds a corner, slips, nearly falls.

INT. MENS' ROOM - NIGHT
Puddles on the floor, stains on the walls.

White bursts through the door and into a cubicle. He bends over a toilet bowl and VOMITS.

ANOTHER ANGLE

He looks up, wipes his mouth on his sleeve. A breeze tugs at his stringy hair. A tiny ventilation grill above the cistern looks out at the street.

HIS P.O.V. - OUTSIDE

Sheets of newspaper blow past. A full moon, surrounded by blood red clouds, hangs above empty streets.

INT. CINEMA - NIGHT

A WATCH - on a hairy wrist. Seconds tick past. Soft flickering light. VOICES O.S.

ANGLE ON FRANK BUMSTEAD - police inspector. He looks down at the watch. Time to leave. He STANDS, heads for an illuminated exit sign.

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CONTINUED:

Images flicker on a SCREEN. The inspector rushes to the door, runs into an USHER, who gasps.

BUMSTEAD (to usher)
Gesundheit!

Bumstead quickly moves off.

INT. CINEMA LOBBY

The INSPECTOR makes a call, licks the tip of a pencil, scribbles in a notebook. Behind thick glass, he argues soundlessly into a phone.

BIG IN FOREGROUND - a popcorn machine rattles noisily.

INSIDE THE BOOTH

The inspector is upset, face strained. A MALE VOICE chatters quickly through the receiver.

BUMSTEAD (cuts in)
...but you told me the meeting was ten-thirty.

A burst of chatter.

BUMSTEAD
I know, sir, but I can't make it at nine-thirty... It's - um - well, inconvenient...

A stream of chatter stops him.

BUMSTEAD
Yes, sir... I understand... Yes... But, I've done fine so far without an assistant...

The inspector tries to interject as the VOICE cuts in again...

BUMSTEAD
But... But I... I...
(defeated)
Nine-thirty. Yes.

INT. MEN'S ROOM

We are underwater. WHITE's FACE swims into view. Bubbles spew from the mouth, the eyes stare in horror.

ANGLE ON MEN'S ROOM

White washes his face in a sink. He looks up, wipes his face dry with his coat. He turns towards the door to leave.

There are TWO - identical. He cannot remember which he came through. Takes a guess, opens one and steps into darkness.

He realizes he's picked the wrong door, tries to go back but the door CLICKS behind him: locked.

INT. CONCRETE TUNNEL

Pitch black. Trickling water. A distant voice over a P.A. system recites names, followed by numbers. A LIGHT, far away. White walks towards it.

He steps into a bare concrete area, a public phone hangs on a blank wall. He pulls a coin from his pocket, puts it in the slot, dials the number on his message. Ringing - no answer.

Suddenly White feels cold.

VOICE O.S.
There you are.

Startled, White drops the phone and turns. A figure moves forward out of darkness:

ANGLE ON THE MYSTERY MAN from the hotel lobby. The stranger wears a long black coat, dark glasses, and has extremely pale skin. He is completely bald. He studies White carefully.

White glances about nervously - walks back up the corridor, his eyes pinned to the man.

MYSTERY MAN
You are lost, yes?

White retreats faster.

A FLASH OF STEEL - a dagger appears by the stranger's side, gripped in a black leather glove. He moves forward, a grin on his pale face.

White stops, backs against the wall.

CONTINUED:

MYSTERY MAN
Co-operate. Do not make this difficult.

White panics - he's cornered. He remembers the revolver. He pulls it from his coat and LEVELS it at the stranger, his hand shakes terribly.

ON THE STRANGER continuing to advance. Something about his eyes makes White immobile, unable to think clearly.

MYSTERY MAN
You will not shoot, yes. There is a place in your mind, a corner of darkness...

THE GUN FIRES again and again. Red splashes appear on the man. His shoulder. His leg. His neck. He walks forward, with spastic jerks as bullets RIP into him.

A final shot POINT BLANK into the stranger's forehead. A stream of black liquid spouts from the hole.

Blue smoke clears. The man stands motionless, his mouth hangs open. Then his eyes roll up, and he collapses to the ground.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

CLICKING of new leather shoes, walking, striking tiles. INSPECTOR BUMSTEAD strides down a silent corridor. He reaches into his pocket, removes a SURGICAL MASK, places it over his nose and mouth.

WIDER ANGLE

Bumstead steps up to a bald man with a moustache standing at the end of the corridor. The man, who is dressed identically to the inspector, is his superior: CHIEF-INSPECTOR STROMBOLI.

BUMSTEAD
Good evening, sir.

STROMBOLI
Yes. This way.

STROMBOLI leads the inspector into a tiled room containing several COVERED BODIES. The two men are greeted by a cheerful-looking MORTICIAN.

CONTINUED:

MORTICIAN
Welcome, gentlemen. You're early.
Here for the examination, right?

Stromboli nods, then ignores the mortician and walks along the row of corpses. Bumstead follows.

STROMBOLI
The handiwork of an extremely sick individual.

He throws back covers to reveal horrible mutilations.

STROMBOLI
You've read the reports. Not much to go on. We know nothing about him, except that he likes to cut them... Always the same type of blade. Forensics match in each case... Anyway, it's all in the reports, read them for yourself.

STROMBOLI shakes his head, turns away from the final body, looks at the inspector.

STROMBOLI
Why are you wearing that thing on your face?

BUMSTEAD
Germs, sir. These places are full of them.

STROMBOLI
I see.
(continues)
One thing's for sure, he's ambitious. You'll be a busy man from now on.

MORTICIAN
You can say that again.

Stromboli looks annoyed at the smiling man. The Mortician becomes serious and goes back to his work.

BUMSTEAD
What about Thompson, sir? Wasn't this his case?

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STROMBOLI
Thompson suffered a kind of severe delusion or some damn thing. Anyway he isn't with us any longer. The case is yours. Go through his files. Take what you need.
(less business-like)
By the way, how's your mother?

BUMSTEAD
She's getting better, thanks. She...

STROMBOLI (cuts in)
Very good...

The chief-inspector turns, paces to the door briskly.

STROMBOLI
Let's go, Bumstead. So much to do and so little time.

EXT. BUILDING - NIGHT

A large faded BILLBOARD advertisement on a building facade. A portrait of a smiling woman clutching a product called, "LUMP-O" -a cereal box carton.

THE CAMERA MOVES IN STEADILY, rises upwards, CLOSER on the woman's face, finally enters a hole at the centre of her PAINTED IRIS.

INT. STAIR-WELL

A raftered room on the other side of the billboard. CAMERA TILTS TO a convoluted staircase - at the base, the SHADOW OF A MAN runs.

FEET pace rapidly. TILT UP TO REVEAL - WHITE.

CAMERA FOLLOWS as he tries to lose himself from possible pursuers. He steps through a low archway into a back alley, rounds a corner.

A DEAD-END. White stops, looks around, then up. He's breathing heavily, trying to catch his breath. He starts to shake.

ABOVE, the walls stretch into darkness. An OPENING way up there -he can see stars. Something dark crosses the gap of sky. A RUSHING NOISE in the distance. Wind starts to pick up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Trash is being kicked up. A sheet of NEWSPAPER wraps around White's leg. He tries to kick it away repeatedly but it won't come off. He bends down, grabs it to throw it away, but something grabs his eye.

He stares at the page for a moment - then his LEGS SLIP from under him and he falls to the ground. He holds his head like it's going to explode. A whimper deep in his throat. His body is trembling violently.

PUSH IN TIGHT on the paper on the ground. A front-page headline: MAN-HUNT CONTINUES FOR SERIAL KILLER!

White looks up - terrified. The RUSHING NOISE O.S. again.

HIS P.O.V.

ON THE WALL facing him, a DOOR has appeared where moments before there was nothing. The door creaks open to reveal ANOTHER DOOR WITHIN. This one extends outwards on the end of a lengthening wooden shaft.

White, stands quickly, thrusts the newspaper into a pocket. Tries to side-step the ADVANCING DOOR but it's too late, he can only open it and step through, to avoid getting pinned to the wall.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

HAND-HELD P.O.V. THROUGH the swaying beads hanging in the back-room doorway. TWO FIGURES peer into the room.

FIGURE 1
We are looking for Jonathan White.

THE HOTEL MANAGER looks up, moves forward into light: a squat, hunch-backed man with glasses. He steps through the beads, glares at the intruders.

MANAGER
What for?

ON THE MEN - an uncanny resemblance to the one who tried to kill White. Black coats, glasses, pale skin. Creepy.

A BLACK GLOVED HAND flashes forward, grips the manager's face and doesn't let go. The manager struggles, gulps for air. He's pushed back heavily against the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN 1
Which room is he in?

The leather glove SQUEEZES, blood trickles from the manager's ears, through the fingers.

INT. ROOM 43

ANOTHER (VERY SHORT) FIGURE is searching the room. He hears NOISES O.S. in the corridor, runs to the door, presses against the wall.

ON THE MAN - FREDRICK - a stunted body, an oversized head, thick limbs. The rest of his features lost in shadow.

The door swings open, a shaft of light floods the dark room.

ON THE TWO MYSTERY MEN as they step in and look around. They search the room, knock stuff over. One of the men kicks at the woman's corpse in the corner. Behind him, Fredrick, still hiding near the door, slips into the corridor unnoticed.

EXT. FLYING P.O.V. - NIGHT

A FLYING PERSPECTIVE past buildings. An INSECT-LIKE BUZZING O.S. Way down BELOW, in a canyon of silent buildings, a LONE FIGURE walks.

EXT. DOWN ON THE STREET

A breeze pulls at WHITE's hair and coat. He takes out the wallet - a few dollars.

HIS P.O.V. AS HE WALKS

The city is DEAD. Empty. Desolate. Buildings hang down out of black. Day-time was never invented.

As he puts the wallet back in his pocket, a BUSINESS CARD he hadn't noticed, flutters to the ground. He stops, picks it up. In simple print: DOCTOR D.P. SCHREBER M.D., a phone number. Scribbled handwriting on the back says: Thursday 0930.

ON WHITE - he glances across the street.

HIS P.O.V. - A cafe. A broken NEON FISH buzzes above the doorway.

INT. CHINESE CAFE

He walks up rickety stairs, into a small room with five or six tables. Empty. Dirty. He sits and waits.

A CLOCK ticks on the wall - midnight. White coughs, for attention.

A NOISE from a doorway. A SHADOW moves towards him, dragging one foot as it walks. A SMALL ASIAN WOMAN appears and limps to his table. She speaks very quickly IN CHINESE. He does not understand.

She points to a chalk board on the wall - a list of dishes also in Chinese, only one in English - the last one. At the bottom. In small print. "NOODLES".

WHITE (nods)
The noodles. I'll have some noodles.

The old woman rips a YELLOW TICKET from a pad, gives it to White. A number on it. She points her crooked finger again - at a SPEAKER BOX above a small serving window in the wall. A greenish fluoro pulses from the room within.

WOMAN
We call.

She leaves again.

White looks about the empty room. Insects are zapped on an illuminated DEVICE hanging on the wall. An old air-conditioner RATTLES noisily.

NOISES from the kitchen - voices argue in Chinese, a baby cries. Then SILENCE.

White removes the newspaper from his coat and spreads it on the table.

He overcomes his fear, starts to read the article. Leans forward, hands trembling. Without realising, he holds the paper OVER A CANDLE burning on the table. The paper CATCHES FIRE, is engulfed. He drops the flaming page on the table. Now the table-cloth starts to burn.

White is frantic. On a nearby table he finds a pitcher of water, and dumps this on the flames. It kills the fire but leaves a black hole in the table-cloth. The paper is ash.

He moves to another table pretending nothing happened, fans the smoke away.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

BUMSTEAD is moving quickly. He suddenly trips and falls to the floor. He curses under his breath, then looks up.

HIS P.O.V.

A door - THOMPSON: DETECTIVE/INSPECTOR on the frosted glass. Bumstead stands, pushes into the office.

INSIDE

A total mess - paperwork everywhere, dozens of used coffee cups, rotting food in greasy paper bags. Bumstead shakes his head.

BUMSTEAD
A real shame...

He starts to look around.

TIGHT ON FILING CABINET - a drawer is pulled open. Thompson's files are also a mess. Bumstead continues to shake his head. He reaches for a file. A loud SNAP!

BUMSTEAD (screams)
YAAAAAAAAAH!

He recoils. A mousetrap has snapped over his fingers. He pulls it off his hand, throws it to the floor, cursing.

INT. CHINESE CAFE

White is still waiting for his food.

He leans down to scratch an itchy ankle, lifts his trouser leg to examine the bites - worse, inflamed. He uses a napkin to wipe at the pus.

AERIAL PERSPECTIVE OF A FLY - circling the room, looking down on White.

ON THE FLY - It lands on a plate of half eaten food on another table. The creature is some kind of SURVEILLANCE DEVICE - half insect/half machine. It's spying on him. MOVE IN TIGHT as inbuilt camera lenses focus in its head. It shits on the food behind it.

White is oblivious to this. He's finished examining his leg, is sitting quietly. He yawns. His head nods forward briefly.

A NOISE. White looks up.

CONTINUED:

A TRAP-DOOR has opened in the ceiling. Two feet in black leather shoes descend from the hole. A sea breeze blows through the room. The SOUND OF SURF, SEAGULLS CRYING.

ON White's nose twitching. He can smell the ocean.

The WALLPAPER COMES ALIVE - like a seething tangle of worms.

One by one, THREE MEN in black coats lower into the room, floating on air. They pull out knifes, step forward.

ON WHITE rigid with terror.

ON THE MEN - though their faces cannot be seen clearly in the gloom, they too resemble the MAN who confronted White earlier. They walk towards him slowly, holding knifes above their heads. Ready to attack. They lean over him, pause dramatically.

MAN 1
Don't fall asleep.
(chuckles softly)
Might never wake, yes.

This Man turns to the others. They all smile, then turn back to White.

MEN (in unison)
Fifty-six.

ANOTHER VOICE has been speaking softly - now it is louder. Repeating:

VOICE
Fifty-six... Fifty-six...

ANGLE - a chair falls to the floor.

White leaps up from the table, terrified, disoriented. Just a DREAM - he had dozed.

WIDEN ANGLE - The place is still empty. White glances to the serving window. A DISH waits for him, framed in the glowing fluoro square. He gets it. A bowl of soupy liquid with noodles. He sits down.

He is about to start eating - realizes he has a fork instead of a spoon. Picking up the bowl again, he heads to the kitchen.

INT. CORRIDOR

He takes a door beneath a set of wooden stairs and finds himself in another corridor. He looks about, unsure which direction to go in.

INT. SERIES OF ROOMS - LATER

White is lost, still holding the soup.

He moves through a number of RUSTED METAL DOORS that open and shut automatically. Each reveals another room or corridor. Deserted spaces long forgotten - dusty, crumbling.

He feels the fish moving about in his pocket, pulls it out and looks at it.

White holds the dying fish in one hand, the bowl of cold soup in the other. Disgusted, he puts the fish into the bowl.

INT. CORRIDOR

A TICKING SOUND O.S.

White stops. Looks up. A large clock suspended from the rafters. A tug at his coat.

Standing beside him is FREDRICK - the little man from White's hotel room.

FREDRICK (stutters)
Where have you been? The doctor's been worried about you.

WHITE
What? Who are you?

Fredrick looks nervously down the corridor.

FREDRICK
C'mon, let's go! We don't have any time.

The little man grabs White's sleeve, starts to pull him along.

WHITE
Hold it a minute. Let's start at the beginning, huh?

ANGLE ON - the top of a set of stairs in front of them. Two dark figures appear.

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CONTINUED:

Fredrick looks up at them in horror.

FREDRICK
Shit!
(looks at White)
Quick! Run!

Both men run like crazy, White awkwardly holding the bowl of soup. They come to a junction, each takes a separate corridor. Fredrick finds some stairs, climbs two at a time.

White climbs INTO FRAME, looks around, finds another corridor. The little man is nowhere to be seen. White reaches another junction - several corridors branch off.

His P.O.V. PANNING AROUND

Each passageway completely deserted.

WHITE
Shit.

He keeps running.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

A PHOTO FLASH - illuminates the dead body of the hotel manager, slumped in his own blood.

Bumstead leans INTO FRAME, examines the corpse. he notices several stab wounds in the man's abdomen. Various cops search the room.

One cop walks up to the Inspector.

COP
We got another one upstairs.

BUMSTEAD (deadpan)
Great.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

A SMALL ROOM with arched windows that look over the city. Fredrick is pulling a notebook and pen from under an upturned table.

He scrawls rapidly, screws the message into a tight tube, then puts it into a METAL CYLINDER he finds beneath the table also.

CONTINUED:

He glances out a window, notices A FIGURE standing beneath a street-lamp below, looking up at him. Startled, Fredrick darts back into shadow, goes to a wall covered in about a dozen vertical PIPES running up into the ceiling.

TIGHT ON ONE OF THE PIPES - he opens a small hatch and puts the metal cylinder in it. The cylinder is snatched from his hand, sucked into the pipe with a rush of air.

WIDER

Fredrick steps back, a sigh of relief. A shadow falls across his back. He turns. He screams.

INT./EXT. VARIOUS

TIGHT - rushing along lengths of rusted pipe, at blinding speed. The cylinder races around corners. It clanks and grinds. HURTLES up the side of a building. THEN PLUMMETS underground. Rushes through darkness.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

THE CAMERA MOVES along a bridge-like structure. An enclosed corridor supported by rotting wooden pylons. Under the bridge, pipes spew sewage into stagnant water.

ANGLE ON WHITE WALKING - seen through a series of illuminated, dirty, windows. He occasionally glances into the bowl he holds before him.

INSIDE

TIGHT ON the fish swimming weakly in the soup.

ANGLE ON WHITE - He stops, looks up at O.S. SOUND of clattering metal. A pipe runs the length of the corridor -the invisible clanging cylinder races away, into darkness.

Then the silence is shattered by a piercing series of SCREAMS somewhere in the building. White hurriedly moves towards the source.

ANOTHER CORRIDOR

White rounds a corner, stops, notices a small rectangular HOLE in a wall. ANOTHER SCREAM, weaker now - He runs to the hole in the wall and looks through.

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CONTINUED:

HIS P.O.V.

A small, very ordered ROOM. A fake fireplace bathes the room in a warm glow.

White cranes his neck forward, stretches his head through the hole. He can see into an adjoining room to his right - two dark figures stand over a man on the floor lying in a pool of dark crimson. The man looks up - it's Fredrick - just as both dark figures stab him repeatedly with bloody daggers. He doesn't scream this time, just gags on blood running from his mouth.

Suddenly a sliding door SLAMS onto the back of White's neck, traps his head in the hole. He struggles, tries to free himself. Drops the bowl of soup. It shatters on the hard floor, makes a mess.

INSIDE THE BATHROOM - The killers look up at the smashing noise.

BACK IN THE CORRIDOR - White pulls with all his strength. The door gives and he stumbles backwards. He is about to run away but glances at the floor.

The fish is flapping about - still alive.

EXT. STREET

White darts from a doorway, trips and falls. He sprawls at the base of sweeping stone steps. He looks at a building towering above him. Chiselled in the facade, above the entrance: LIBRARY.

INT. POLICE STATION

A series of ply-wood SILHOUETTES race through frame. Stop suddenly, mechanically. LOUD GUNSHOTS. Chunks of ply-wood blast away violently.

BUMSTEAD is practising his marksmanship.

A HAND - on his shoulder. He whips around, startled.

ON MISS CRENSHAW - a young, stiff-looking woman.

BUMSTEAD
Dammit!

MISS CRENSHAW
Sorry, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD
Don't ever sneak up on me like that! Who are you?

MISS CRENSHAW
Patricia Crenshaw.

She puts out her hand.

MISS CRENSHAW
I'm your new assistant.

BUMSTEAD
I didn't requisition a secretary.

MISS CRENSHAW
The Chief-Inspector thought you might need a hand.

BUMSTEAD (uncertain)
Oh.

He takes her hand tentatively. They shake.

MISS CRENSHAW
I've taken the liberty and had Inspector Thompson's office searched, as I believe you instructed. All clear now, sir. They found several more traps and things were filed under pretty strange categories... Poor man.

BUMSTEAD
Good.

MISS CRENSHAW
You won't regret this, sir.

BUMSTEAD
Fine.

Bumstead moves off.

INT. LIBRARY

White steps into a vast, empty room, stops beneath a big sign saying, SILENCE in formal letters. The place seems abandoned, then he notices a hint of movement. Cigarette smoke snakes into the air, a light, across the expanse of polished floor.

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CONTINUED:

He walks up to an elderly female LIBRARIAN sitting behind a desk, smoking, reading. White looks somewhat distraught still.

WHITE
Keep newspapers here, birth certificates, records of deaths, that kind of thing?

The librarian looks up from her book.

LIBRARIAN
Which would you like first?

WHITE
Okay. Newspapers.

She takes her glasses off. Her eyes are TINY, like pin-heads. She studies White.

LIBRARIAN
Are you alright?

He looks around - restrained panic.

WHITE (looks at the woman)
Sure. I'm fine.

LIBRARIAN (nods)
Mmm-hmm. Stairs at the end of the hall. Third floor. Turn left. Section C-7. Row 35, near the toilets.

She replaces her glasses, watches White rush away.

LIBRARIAN
Don't mention it...

She blows her nose into a handkerchief. The snort ECHOES LOUDLY.

INT. LIBRARY CORRIDOR

White rushes down a dark hall lined with bronze statues. He finds section C then walks between towering rows stacked with old volumes. Comes to number 7.

He follows an arrow past row after row - finally finds Row 34 but then it skips straight to letters again, A, B, C, etc.

No Row 35.

CONTINUED:

He stops and looks around - sure enough a door displays a small sign: TOILETS.

White is sweating profusely. He now sits on a chair, takes off his shoes, rubs his feet. He pulls a book from a shelf behind him, looks about, opens the book and tears several pages out, folds them, stuffs them into his shoes to plug up the holes.

He gets up, tries to backtrack, comes across an elaborate diagram of the library interior. An arrow points to a section near a wing labelled: MAPS. Near the arrow it says: YOU ARE HERE.

He keeps walking.

He finds the door to the maps wing but the door is locked, a sign is nailed to it: WE ARE REMODELLING. WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE.

White, annoyed now, tries to force his way in. Puts his shoulder to the door, pushes several times. It CRUMBLES under his weight -rotten.

He finds himself in a DUSTY ROOM.

HIS P.O.V.

A narrow room, filled with rows of bookshelves with stacks of old newspapers.

TIGHT ON WHITE - he steps forward, pulls a folded newspaper off the shelf. The instant he picks it up, it crumbles to dust in his hands. He picks up another, and another, each in turn breaking apart and dissolving to nothingness.

INT. DARK CHAMBER - NIGHT

TWO SILHOUETTED FIGURES face each other across a polished black table. They speak in a foreign language. A phone rings. Figure 1 picks up the receiver and listens attentively.

Figure 2 is involved with various metal shapes he is trying to lock together. A complex puzzle. He gets impatient with the puzzle, dashes it to the floor.

Figure 1, on the phone, hangs up and writes something. Hands the note to Figure 2, who in turn drops it into A CHUTE.

CONTINUED:

CONTROL ROOM

The note falls from a slot in the wall before Figure 3 (in shadow yet again). He reads from the note over a silver microphone, still in the unfamiliar tongue.

TIGHT ON A SPEAKER - his distorted voice. A final mysterious person - Figure 4 - listens to the announcement. He takes a stick and moves a small cut-out figure of a man across a board, away from a large grouping of similar cut-outs. The board resembles a planning table in a war-room.

A HIGH ANGLE as the CAMERA PULL BACKS on the grouping of cut-out figures. More and more of them. Ten. Twenty. A hundred. A sinister army.

INT. INTERSECTING STREET - NIGHT

White is in a phone booth. He removes the note from his pocket, dials. No answer again. He dials the OPERATOR. A muffled voice over the line.

WHITE
I'm trying to reach nine zero eight triple two. I can't get through...
(beat)
What?!...
(angry)
Shit!

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a coin, puts it into the slot. He's sweating again. He wipes his brow with a trembling hand.

WHITE
It is?... Which area is that number listed in?... Is that near the ocean?... The ocean... Never mind. Have a Jonathan White listed?... WHITE. Seventeen? All Johns? I see... Never mind.

He hangs up, then removes the business card he found in his wallet. He is about to dial but decides otherwise. He steps into the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A HIGH ANGLE

White walks between tall buildings, towards a narrow street that branches off into two separate routes. He stops. He can't decide which branch to take - he steps to the left, then steps back, takes a few steps to the right, reconsiders again...

INT. POLICE STATION/BUMSTEAD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

TRACK ALONG - piles of towering files bursting at the seams with paperwork - TO FIND Bumstead hunched over notes, photographs and files. His eyes are rimmed with red. He doesn't seem to be getting anywhere.

CRENSHAW O.S.
Coffee?

He looks up. The secretary stands in the doorway with another big pile of paperwork.

BUMSTEAD
What? I don't drink coffee. A cup of tea would be good. Milk and no sugar.

Crenshaw puts the paperwork down on Bumstead's already overcrowded desk.

CRENSHAW
Making progress?

He looks at her like she just slapped him.

BUMSTEAD
These are the investigations of a madman. He has fabricated an entire bizarre paranoid delusion with no internal logic whatever.
(without looking up)
This is a mess. A horrible mess.
(looks at her now)
It's the second time now.

Miss Crenshaw looks concerned.

BUMSTEAD
Look at this!

He holds up a sheet of white paper - a report. The woman steps over and looks at it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD
You typed this report?

MISS CRENSHAW
Yes, sir. Anything wrong?

BUMSTEAD
Wrong? Look at this!

The woman bends down, adjusts her glasses, examines it.

MISS CRENSHAW
It seems fine.

BUMSTEAD
Fine? Look here!

His finger points at the bottom of the page - a tiny, INSIGNIFICANT ink smudge.

BUMSTEAD
How can I submit this?

MISS CRENSHAW
I'm sorry...

BUMSTEAD
Do you wash your hands before you type things?

MISS CRENSHAW
Why, yes.

BUMSTEAD
Well be more careful, please.

An embarrassed beat, then:

RI-I-I-ING!

Bumstead reaches for the phone but Crenshaw is on it first.

CRENSHAW
Inspector Bumstead's office...
Yes... Yes...

She cups the receiver with her hand, looks at Bumstead.

CONTINUED: (2)

MISS CRENSHAW
Yes, sir. The Chief-Inspector said he would see you now.

INT. POLICE STATION HALL-WAY

TRACKING SHOT towards a door: CHIEF-INSPECTOR on the frosted glass. A hand reaches INTO FRAME, knocks twice.

STROMBOLI O.S.
Enter!

INSIDE

Bumstead steps into the office - finds STROMBOLI wandering about the room, distracted, searching for something...

STROMBOLI
What is it?

He pulls the waste-basket up and empties the contents onto his desk, sorts through it.

BUMSTEAD
A formality. I need to speak with Thompson. Officially I need your written permission.

Stromboli is looking through his desk drawers now.

STROMBOLI
Why do you want to speak to him?

BUMSTEAD
A hunch. He might be able to...

STROMBOLI (from under desk)
Bumstead, don't be so paranoid. Leave him alone - he's a sad case.

BUMSTEAD
It's extremely important to my investigation...

STROMBOLI
I'll be the judge of that. Anything else?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD
Actually, I was wondering, sir, if you could let me have a few uniforms, to follow up for me...

STROMBOLI O.S. (pokes head above desk)
Absolutely not. Up to my ears in cases right now - can't spare anyone.

Stromboli becomes distracted again - stands up, looks behind pictures hanging off the walls. A big sign suspended above his desk says, SO MUCH TO DO AND SO LITTLE TIME - his motto.

WHITE
Lost something?

STROMBOLI
What makes you think that! If you would learn to concentrate on facts, not get so side-tracked - you might get things done faster, Bumstead...

The door clicks shut. Stromboli looks up - the inspector has gone.

EXT. PLAZA - NIGHT

White walks under stone archways.

Across an empty plaza is a sign above a door: DRUGS OPEN 24 HOURS and in smaller print, recently added beneath: SHAVE & HAIRCUT $5.00.

INT. DRUG STORE - NIGHT

White walks between bare, dusty shelves. Only one shelf carries products - BOX AFTER BOX OF "LUMP-O". He moves up to a small counter. A man with thick glasses, dressed like a BARBER, is seated there.

WHITE
I need something to keep me awake.

BARBER
Looks like you need a haircut to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHITE
Thanks. Just some pills.

BARBER
Only two bucks. Shave as well...

WHITE (annoyed now)
Your sign says you sell drugs - well, I'm here to buy some. Okay?

BARBER
Relax. Sure!

He waves dramatically to a shelf above his head, with several bottles of all sorts of different coloured capsules.

BARBER
Tell you what - let me cut yer hair, give ya watcha need half price. Can't argue at that!

WHITE (evenly)
I don't <u>want</u> a haircut.

LATER

CAMERA TRACKS OFF a clock on a wall - REVEALS WHITE in a barber chair. The BARBER gleefully works on WHITE's hair. A thin OLD GUY in a moth-eaten suit steps from behind a curtain, smiles, playing a violin. He's passionate but bad.

BARBER (talks fast)
Cut hair when I was in the navy, y'know - haven't lost the touch. Bet you're happy 'bout that. Huh!

WHITE
Sell maps?

BARBER
What of?

WHITE
The city. I need to get to the ocean.

BARBER
Nope. No maps. Ocean, huh? On vacation?

White doesn't answer. The old guy with the violin moves back and forth behind White, smiling as he plays.

CONTINUED: (2)

BARBER
Grandpa thought customers might like some mood music.

WHITE (unconvinced)
Nice...

BARBER
You still look familiar. It's driving me nuts! Sure I don't know ya from somewhere?

WHITE (nervous now)
Not me.

Barber looks out the front window as his hands busily trim hair.

BARBER
Mmmm. Cold lately.
(lathers up White's face)
That night, couple weeks ago. That was <u>real</u> cold. Remember that?

WHITE
Not really...

BARBER
Yeah, I'm like that. Senility says the wife. But she sure can't complain. Heh! The erector set still works good.
(points to head)
And this ain't no fucking rug! G'head. Feel it! All mine!

Grandpa laughs and plays louder.

GRANDPA
Yes! <u>Feeeeel</u> it!

PUSH IN ON WHITE - he smiles weakly.

INT. DETAIL - NIGHT

A HAND scrawls cryptic diagrams into a notebook.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PULL OUT TO REVEAL

DOCTOR SCHREBER at his desk. He's bearded, with thick lensed glasses. He puts the phone down, sits quietly at his desk, staring into space, lost in thought.

A LOUD RATTLING NOISE FILLS THE ROOM. Schreber looks up.

HIS P.O.V.

A rusted pipe runs across the ceiling and down one wall. He steps across to the pipe on the wall, leans down, looks into an open hatch at its base.

Without warning, out of the hatch pops the metal cylinder FROM SEVERAL SCENES PREVIOUS and bounces off the doctor's head.

He curses, picks it up, opens it. He plucks out the note and reads FREDRICK's SCRAWLED MESSAGE:

> DOCTOR, I DID AS YOU ASKED. BUT
> THINK I MADE STUPID MISTAKE. HOPE
> THINGS DON'T GET BACK TO YOU. SORRY.
> - FREDRICK.

Schreber looks up - then PUNCHES HIS FIST into the desk angrily.

INT. EMPTY BUILDING

A P.O.V. MOVES DOWN halls made of wood slatting - the floors, walls and ceilings are bare boards. FOOTSTEPS O.S.

TIGHT ON - a man's shadow as it descends a wooden staircase.

REVEAL WHITE - He rummages in a paper bag as he walks. Pulls out two capsules, swallows them. Now he pulls out a pack of 'LUMP-O', rips it open, eats ravenously.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

White steps out into a street, turns a corner, drops the empty packet of cereal. Now he sees TWO FIGURES APPROACH. He hides behind a wall before he is seen. Suddenly a deafening RINGING startles him. He looks across a plaza.

HIS P.O.V. - A CHURCH. A bell-tower, black against the sky.

White stares up into the night.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

White walks in, sits on A PEW, towards the back of the room, glances over his shoulder. He tries to blend in with the SMALL GATHERING OF PEOPLE sitting silently around him.

A PRIEST - appears at the altar, cloaked in a blood-red robe, followed by two altar boys also in red. They move past a statue of an insect-like creature, walk in circles chanting softly, stop and stare at the congregation through eye-slits in their hoods. The priest begins his sermon.

PRIEST
Beware! The night is deadly. There is a criminal among us.

White looks forward.

TIGHT ON the priest's hand - It rises, points, moves over the heads of the congregation, accusingly. Suddenly the red finger jabs towards an OLD WOMAN in the front row.

PRIEST
It could be she! The innocent across the street!

All the congregation turn and stare at the woman. She's terrified.

The hand moves slowly now, across to a BEAUTIFUL JAPANESE WOMAN several rows back.

PRIEST
Or the temptress next door!

The priest pauses dramatically then:

PRIEST
Or mister nervy stranger at the back!

Suddenly the finger is pointing at White. All the faces turn, stare suspiciously at White.

ANGLE ON WHITE - frozen with fright. Fortunately his face is obscured by shadow and the priest lowers his hand, continues the sermon. The people look away.

PRIEST
You are thinking it could be anyone? And you're right! Why, it could even be Mother!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

White goes to leave. As he stands he notices the DOORS of the church open - two figures step in and move into the candle-light.

MYSTERY MEN - White's bizarre pursuers. They look around.

White ducks down, crawls between pews, startling several of the congregation. He motions to them to keep quiet. He runs into the legs of the BEAUTIFUL WOMAN the priest pointed out. She is startled momentarily but looks down at him, smiles.

PRIEST (continues sermon)
Evil stalks our streets. It seeks to hide in our hearts. Have you not evil within you now?

White sees a nearby CONFESSION BOX. Staying low, he runs, almost knocks over a large illuminated candle-holder, darts inside. The girl watches him.

A GAUNT-FACED WOMAN stands. Hysterical. She looks at the priest.

GAUNT WOMAN
He took my little boy! I'll rip out his eyes!

INSIDE - White breaths relief.

HIS P.O.V. - carved on the dark stained wood in front of him is a crucified insect. A voice surprises him. Another PRIEST, OLDER.

OLDER PRIEST
You have sinned?

WHITE
No. Ah...

White watches the two Mystery Men walk past, through the ornate wooden grill in front of his face.

PRIEST
I am listening.

WHITE (lying)
There's a... woman. I don't know but I think I, ah...

PRIEST
You fornicated?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Mystery Men look towards the box for a moment, towards White, but keep walking.

WHITE
No. I, ah...

PRIEST
You seem restless.

The Mystery Men seem to have gone. White takes out the gun, keeping it hidden from the priest. Opens the chamber.

TIGHT ON THE GUN - Only ONE BULLET left.

WHITE
Someone's after me.

PRIEST
Then we must call the police.

WHITE
No. I mean... that isn't necessary.

The silhouette on the other side of the box leans forward.

PRIEST
I see. Then who is after you? What sins have you committed?

WHITE
Just let me sit here for a moment? I'll go soon, and stop bothering you.

The priest suddenly stares incredulously at White. His eyes widen in horror.

PRIEST
You're the murderer?
(starts to yell)
Yes! That must be it! Don't kill me!

White lunges, grabs his collar with one hand, slaps the other over his mouth. The old man stares at him, trembling uncontrollably.

WHITE
Shut up! Listen. Walk out quietly.
(holds up gun)
Understand?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The priest nods stupidly. White pushes him out of the confession box, grabs his coat from behind, puts the gun to his back. Together they head for the doors. Still no sign of the Mystery Men.

PRIEST
Don't kill me!

WHITE
Shut up!

PRIEST
Please...

White loses his temper, grabs the priest, shakes him violently.

WHITE (not so quietly)
I'm not going to kill you, okay!

Faces turn.

The priest kicks White in the leg, bites his hand. While White is whincing in pain, the priest breaks away.

PRIEST (shouting/pointing)
CRIMINAL!

People start to scream and run. The GAUNT WOMAN points at White.

GAUNT WOMAN (screams insanely)
It's him! Rip out his eyes!

Frightened, White holds the gun out. Everyone panics, scatters. People run for the exit. Religious statues topple and smash. The gaunt woman is pushed screaming to the floor, trampled by the crowd.

Amidst the chaos, the two MYSTERY MEN appear across the room, see White, head towards him. He turns and runs.

A STAIRCASE

White climbs narrow stairs rapidly.

INT. BELL TOWER

White stops, nowhere left to go, just a long drop to the street through a series of arched windows. A low, raftered room, three huge black BELLS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly a groan of gears in the ceiling and the bells start to swing, build momentum.

CLANG! CLA-A-A-ANG! A cacophony of noise.

White puts his hands over his ears in pain, then turns to the stairs.

HIS P.O.V.

Through the swinging bells - the MYSTERY MEN climb the last few steps on the other end of the dark room. They advance slowly, clutching daggers.

White raises his gun. Aims. Difficult to find his target - the approaching MEN are obscured by the bells.

White steps sideways, never taking his eyes off the Men. They follow him slowly, pivoting about the bells in the centre of the tower, pursuers and pursued remaining a semi-circle apart.

WHITE (shouts)
What do you want? Tell me!

The Men stop. So does White. They separate, now approaching him from OPPOSITE sides, moving around the bells.

White doesn't know who to point the gun at - he swings back and forth, one to the other, faster and faster, as the Men approach.

He lets them get uncomfortably close, then swings to his right, thrusts the gun to one Man's forehead. FIRES. The Man steps back, spouting liquid from the bullet hole, hits a low railing, FALLS into the shaft at the centre of the tower.

The second Man SWINGS his dagger at White.

White falls backwards, dropping his gun clumsily. The Man advances, smiling - kicks the gun across the wooden floor.

White, clutching at straws, lifts his foot, kicks down hard on a loose floorboard. The board flies up, pivoting against White's heel, catches the Mystery Man with a CRACK under the chin.

White runs at the off-balance Man, head-butts him in the stomach. The Man recoils, can't stop, steps off backwards into space, PLUMMETS INTO DARKNESS towards the street below.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

White relieved, turns, dusts himself, picks up his gun. Looks down at the floor. Broken glass and capsules everywhere -he dropped the bottle of pills during the scuffle. Starts to pick them up.

Behind him SOMETHING is rising.

The shadowy Mystery Man is LEVITATING HIMSELF back up to the bell-tower. He lands behind White, approaches, lifting his dagger, closer and closer.

White glances around.

The Man lunges, pushing White towards the shaft beneath the swinging bells. White FALLS, dangles over dark space, the Man stands above him.

MYSTERY MAN (shouts)
Do not make us hurt you...

The bells are swinging very close to the Man.

MYSTERY MAN
It will be inconvenient, yes...

Suddenly, to White's amazement, the shiny black rim of a bell clips the Man's head. SLAMS it against a low wooden beam in the ceiling. A splash of black liquid. The Man slumps to the ground, his head crushed beyond recognition.

White pulls himself up - stands over the Man's body, trying to decide what to do. A MOVEMENT catches his eye.

TIGHT ON the collapsed Man's ear - something moves inside. A BLACK INSECT, half-dead, crawls out of his crushed head.

White revolted, SQUASHES the insect under his shoe.

EXT./INT. VARIOUS - MONTAGE

RAPID MOVE ACROSS MYSTERY MEN screaming. Faces contort with pain. INTERCUT WITH:

Electricity ARCING between electrodes.

A building against the sky. The windows EXPLODE. Glass blows out, raining down on the street.

A concrete wall SPLITS OPEN. Slime oozes through the crack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An old man, walks on a deserted street, looks up at the sky. One of the lenses of his spectacles CRACKS without warning.

A chair falls over in a dark room.

A woman under a hair-dryer gossips on a phone. Suddenly the phone emits a high-pitched shriek. Her ear spouts blood and she screams.

A small transistor radio emits a high frequency and short circuits with a spark.

EXT. BUILDING

TIGHT ON - a wristwatch spinning backwards rapidly - completely haywire.

INSPECTOR BUMSTEAD stands on a street corner staring blankly at his watch. Taps it several times, annoyed, then looks up at a THREE STOREY BUILDING. He holds a piece of paper in his other hand - on it a number rapidly scrawled: 23.

HIS P.O.V.

The dilapidated building - arched windows only on the topmost floor. A faded number on the facade - also 23. The windows light up continuously with rapid bursts of white light.

INSIDE

The inspector climbs a staircase, enters a dark room.

TWO FIGURES move about. Bumstead glances at a UNIFORMED MAN, standing beside a fake fire, who acknowledges his arrival.

To the side, A POLICE PHOTOGRAPHER flashes something swinging back and forth, hanging from the ceiling. It looks like... Fredrick. Dead. His arms and legs missing. A pool of blood beneath the mutilated torso.

Bumstead looks at the cop.

BUMSTEAD
How long have you been here?

COP
Maybe ten minutes...
(looks at his watch)
...that's strange.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD
Spinning backwards?

The cop is shaking his watch, tapping it with his finger. He looks up. Bumstead indicates his own watch.

COP
Yours too?

Bumstead nods. He removes a notebook from his pocket, walks about the room, glances at objects, makes notes.

Bumstead steps over to a small RECTANGULAR HOLE in the wall. He examines it carefully, then bends down and puts his head through. On the other side is a corridor snaking off into darkness. Just beneath the hole, is a broken dish and a puddle. Lying half in the puddle is the business card of Doctor D.P. Schreber M.D.

Without removing his head from the hole he shouts to the nearby cop.

BUMSTEAD
I want prints over here...

Suddenly the door has caught Bumstead's head in it. He struggles. The cop and the photographer run over to help.

EXT. BUILDING - NIGHT

MOVE IN ON a doorway. Above it a small illuminated red sign: DOCTOR D.P. SCHREBER M.D.

REVERSE ANGLE ON WHITE

He stands on the street, under the sign, rummaging in his wallet, obviously looking for the business card he doesn't have anymore.

INT. WAITING ROOM

A white room, bare. Dirt stains the walls near the air-vents. A NURSE is typing behind her desk.

A THUMPING fills the room. The nurse stands, removes her shoe and hits a pipe running along the wall several times. The noise stops.

The front door creaks open and White enters. She watches him step into the room.

CONTINUED:

WHITE
I want to see the doctor. It's important.

NURSE
What time was your appointment?

WHITE (angry)
Look! Tell him I'm here. Now.

He's leaning across her desk threateningly.

NURSE (scared/standing)
Yes, certainly... Who should I say?

WHITE
No idea. Just get him...

Suddenly a door opens and DOCTOR SCHREBER, clutching a file of papers, steps out. He freezes, stares at White. The papers fall from his hands to the floor.

INT. DARK CHAMBER - NIGHT

A group of DARK SILHOUETTES file into a concrete room.

The MYSTERY MEN have gathered. Like the Men who pursue White, they wear coats, leather gloves, dark glasses, and have near white skin.

One MAN points to diagrams on a chalk board and speaks in the peculiar foreign tongue.

TIGHT ON THE DIAGRAM - a path through the city. A circle marks the point where the red line ends - a cathedral. The Man goes into broken English - a guttural accent.

MAN 1
It has failed.

ANOTHER MAN stands at the rear of the room.

MAN 2
This is becoming dangerous, yes!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YET ANOTHER MAN starts to tremble violently, seized with some kind of convulsion. He froths at the mouth and throws his head about. A TALLER MAN standing beside him opens a silver box, removes a small WRITHING WORM. He places this on the tip of the trembling Man's tongue, who swallows it and calms down.

MAN 3
Let's get this over with.

ANOTHER MAN rises suddenly, pushes forcefully to the front of the group.

MAN 5
What about the dance-steps! This is my responsibility, we must resolve this issue, yes?

ALL THE MEN turn to face him. He is out of line. He becomes agitated, as if to say something further, then pulls himself short, sits down.

MAN 5
Sorry.

MAN 3
The situation has changed.
(pacing the room)
This one is in possession of knowledge...

MAN 1 (cuts in)
...to avoid influence, yes.

MAN 4
A freak!

MAN 1
Impossible!

A RUMBLING NOISE O.S. attracts everyone's attention. They all look to a round portal high on a wall. The noise is louder. Several figures on stilts run past outside the opening -then the noise subsides. The MYSTERY MEN go back to more important things.

MAN 3
It gets interesting, yes.

MAN 2
Stop this! It has gone too far!
Tell Mister Black!

CONTINUED: (2)

Man 2 stares blankly into space, he makes a peculiar clicking noise with his mouth, his eyes roll upwards.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

THE CAMERA GLIDES down a corridor, towards a door - a sign says, DOCTOR IS: IN.

INSIDE

White sits in a leather chair across from an ornate wooden desk. THE DOCTOR paces up and down in front of glass jars containing preserved specimens. He stops, looks at White.

SCHREBER
You remember nothing? Who you are? What you've done?

WHITE
You know something about me?

SCHREBER
Ah, that would be cheating, wouldn't it?
(smiles)
Is there nothing you remember? Not even a detail? You must try.

WHITE
You think I haven't been trying!
(calms himself)
It's like there was never anything there.
(pauses)
Just water.

SCHREBER
Water?

WHITE
Waves... A beach. A woman whispering. That's all.
(looks up, yawns)
I need to stay awake. Do you have any pills?

The doctor walks to a glass cabinet and removes a bottle, takes out two green capsules. Hands them to White. Sits behind the desk again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCHREBER
What does she say? The woman.

WHITE
Asks my name. Over and over. Just like a broken record. Only thing is, I can't answer. I've no idea what my name is.

SCHREBER
Your name is John White.

WHITE
That's what people keep telling me.

The doctor walks to a small sink in the corner, returns, hands White a glass of water. White swallows the pills.

SCHREBER (indicates pills)
And what's this about? Why?

White stands up, starts to pace nervously.

SCHREBER
Bad dreams?

WHITE
Yes.

SCHREBER
Tell me about them...

WHITE (interrupts)
Yeah well, why don't I ask some questions for a change.

SCHREBER
If you like.

WHITE
You're supposed to be my doctor, right?

SCHREBER
That's right. I am your doctor.

White is very agitated now, his voice is getting edgy.

WHITE
Known me for long?

CONTINUED: (2)

SCHREBER
Well...

WHITE (cuts in)
Am I a killer?

SCHREBER
I cannot say... You don't know the answer to that?

WHITE
I told you, I can't remember a thing!

White reaches across abruptly, GRABS the doctor.

WHITE (angry now - shouting)
Look, you know something about me, out with it! Let's end this bullshit! I want answers!

The doctor is obviously scared.

SCHREBER
We won't get anywhere like this. Please. Let's take things in easy steps...

INT. BUMSTEAD'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT

TIGHT ON DRAWING PINS - Being pushed into a map. A seeming random pattern across the terrain of the city. Each pin is labelled: VICTIM 1, VICTIM 2,... etc.

WIDER ON BUMSTEAD

He's tired, like he hasn't slept. He's looking at the map stuck to a wall. There's several neat piles of folders on the kitchen table in front of him. The kitchen itself is incredibly neat -everything completely organized.

Bumstead shakes his head slowly, turns away from the board. Picks up a cup of hot tea, pours milk into it from a small jar.

TIGHT ON THE TEA CUP - Cream SWIRLS into a rapidly dissolving spiral. Bumstead looks up. Puts down the cup hurriedly, turns back to the map.

With a thick pen he traces a line between each point marking the location of the victims. He steps back to examine his handiwork.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A SPIRAL - moving outwards. Beyond the last victim it becomes a dotted line, following the same trajectory but with a big question mark beside it.

Bumstead glances over to a blackboard with a list of names and addresses on it. He holds up the doctor's card and stares at it. He turns it over, notices an address on the back.

INT. DOCTOR SCHREBER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

SCHREBER is showing WHITE a series of CHARTS. The doctor seems nervous about White's potential for further violence.

SCHREBER
Put simply... a penetration of the left parieto-occipital area of the cranium... complicated by inflammation that resulted in adhesions of the brain to the meninges. Without going into detail... the formation of scar tissue altered the configuration of the lateral ventricles, producing incipient atrophy of the medulla...

WHITE (cuts in)
Look. It was a simple question. Can someone kill and not remember it?

SCHREBER (smiles)
I'm sorry. I get carried away sometimes. Possible? I'm... ah, afraid so.

WHITE
Did she drown? The woman you told me about?

SCHREBER
Not exactly. She was found in a canal, disembowelled. Throat cut. Blood drained. The body wrapped in a bed-sheet.

White shakes his head, looking blankly at the doctor.

WHITE
Horrible...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCHREBER
You remember nothing, eh?
(shakes his head)
Let me show you something.

Schreber turns, points to DOUBLE-DOORS. He walks towards these. White follows.

SCHREBER
Formation of memories is the most important of brain functions.

THE DOORS ARE OPENED

They step into a room of living animal experiments.

SCHREBER
We are little more than a sum of memories. From them we reference who we are, where we're going. Without a past we are nothing. This is why you are so interesting.

WHITE
I'm nothing then.

SCHREBER
Anything <u>but</u>, my friend.

The two men look down on a monkey with the top of its head missing, squirming in a mechanical device that restricts its movements.

SCHREBER
It feels no pain.

White turns and starts to pace away. Schreber reluctantly follows.

WHITE
Can I get my life back?

SCHREBER
Maybe.

Schreber points dramatically at a wooden structure containing two rats.

CONTINUED: (2)

SCHREBER
We know of two kinds of memory. Firstly, declarative memory.

The rats perform various activities involving mazes and geometric symbols. Schreber turns to look at White, eyebrow raised.

SCHREBER
And then there is procedural memory.

TIGHT ON HIS SLENDER FINGER - pointing to a machine also run by rats. The object is to make it through a guillotine device. One rat is successful, the other is chopped neatly in two.

SCHREBER
Follow?

White nods.

SCHREBER
Research on simple animals can be... useful. To show us where memory storing systems are located, for example. I am building an experiment with hamsters next.
(looks at nearby cage of hamsters)
Cute little things.

Schreber puts a hand on White's shoulder.

SCHREBER
Listen to me talk! You must be hungry.

White nods again, extremely troubled.

INT. HALL-WAY (DOCTOR'S RESIDENCE)

Schreber's office is an annex of his living quarters - a maze-like series of rooms and halls. White is led down a dark hall by Schreber, clutching a candle.

SCHREBER
Whole damn wing lost power. Wiring's old. Keep meaning to get it fixed. Here we are.

They've stopped outside a flaking door.

INT. KITCHEN

A small eat-in kitchen. Dirty and run-down. White, sits at a bench, as Schreber removes items from the refrigerator. The doctor holds up a large FROZEN fish.

SCHREBER
Ah. Beautiful! Head and all! Just how I like 'em!

ANGLE ON FRYING PAN ON STOVE - The fish lands in it and starts to sizzle furiously.

ANGLE ON WHITE

WHITE
I'm sorry. About before.

SCHREBER
I don't blame you for getting angry. You are in a frustrating situation. You must be patient though. Trust me completely. I'm here to help.

A set of swinging doors on the other side of the room open slightly and THE NURSE looks in.

NURSE (to Schreber)
I have to talk to you.

SCHREBER
It can't wait?

She shakes her head, with a serious expression, then darts out again.

SCHREBER (to White)
Excuse me. Ah, make yourself at home.

He leaves.

Alone, White looks around the bleak room. He takes off his coat and sits down again. He removes the FISH. The eye opens. The creature looks up at him. It breaths painfully.

WHITE
Still kicking, huh?

He puts it back in his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The OTHER fish is spattering oil everywhere. Smoke starts to fill the room. White, steps over and looks at the frying pan. The fish is turning black. He turns the heat down.

He notices a SMALL HOLE in the wall. At eye height. He steps across, looks through.

TIGHT ON WHITE'S eye through the hole.

HIS P.O.V.

A dark room. Shadows on the wall. Something wet, some kind of ANIMAL, moving in the darkness. He can hear breathing and whispering voices.

White's eyes start to blur, he rubs them.

SCHREBER O.S.
How are things in here?

White spins, like he's caught doing something wrong. The Doctor walks across to the stove, prods the frying fish with a fork.

SCHREBER
Ah, nearly done. So tell me about your dreams. I'm very interested.

White is having a hard time focusing.

WHITE
Just the typical fabrications of a distorted mind. You know, chased by mysterious men in black, that kind of thing...

WHITE'S P.O.V. - ANGLE ON Schreber with his back turned, at the stove. THE IMAGE is blurring.

SCHREBER
Ah, our friends in black... they are not just a figment of your imagination you know, in fact none of what you are experiencing is anything but real.

Smoke rises thickly around the doctor.

SCHREBER
I know everything about you. You have no choice but to trust me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Flames are shooting up around Schreber from the frying pan. His arms catch fire, and he suddenly spins around clutching flaming daggers in both hands, his whole body engulfed in fire, his face charred, black flesh hanging off his skull.

SCHREBER
Scarey, isn't it?

White startles awake.

Schreber stands at the stove looking at White. Everything is normal.

SCHREBER
Are you feeling alright?

White stands awkwardly, pulls his coat on.

SCHREBER
What are you doing?

WHITE
I have to go...

SCHREBER
You can't go yet. We've got so much to talk about...

Suddenly White feels feint - leans against the wall to steady himself.

SCHREBER
You're tired. You need to lie down.

ON WHITE - swaying.

WHITE
Those pills...

His P.O.V.

The scene is distorted - like looking through water. Things start SPINNING.

SCHREBER (echoic)
Yes. A little something to help you relax. Harmless...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

A tile floor RISES rapidly TOWARDS CAMERA.

CUT TO:

GREY LIMBO

Objects float underwater. They rise upwards amidst bubbles, break the surface. A storm at sea - dismembered BODY PARTS float all the way to the horizon.

TWO FOETUSES in separate jars are talking to each other through the glass.

FOETUS 1
This is madness. If we're caught...

FOETUS 2
Shut-up. Help me with these straps...

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM

WHITE wakes strapped to an examination table. SCHREBER and the NURSE loom above him. The nurse hands Schreber a long, chrome SYRINGE. The doctor moves towards White.

SCHREBER (holds syringe up)
Now you must relax, Anton.

A DOOR-BELL RINGS O.S. The nurse makes for the door.

SCHREBER
Leave it!

He's tapping the side of the syringe, squirting out air bubbles. THE DOOR-BELL RINGS again - very insistent. Schreber looks at the nurse, annoyed.

SCHREBER
Damn! Whoever it is - get rid of them!

She heads to the door - turns back.

NURSE
Keys.

Schreber puts the syringe down, fumbles in his pocket, pulls out a huge collection of KEYS on a ring, walks to the nurse, hands them to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

White manages to wriggle a hand free from the leather strap holding him. The nurse leaves, the doctor shuts the door, locks it. He steps over to White.

SCHREBER
I'm sorry I had to put you through this, Anton.
(lowers syringe to White's forehead)
There will be some pain, but things will be easier this way.

White lashes out, PUNCHES the doctor in the face. His glasses go flying, and he falls to the floor, blinded, scrambling for the spectacles.

A convenient scalpel cuts White from his remaining bonds. He undoes the last strap around his ankles as the doctor replaces his glasses and leaps at him trying to drive the syringe INTO WHITE'S FOREHEAD.

The struggle continues - each man tries to turn the syringe on the other. White pushes the doctor, who falls backwards. Schreber leaps onto him, both fall against a tray of medical instruments.

A loud THUMPING on the examination room door. White is grabbed from behind, pinned down with the syringe INCHES from his face.

A CRASH O.S. Splintering wood. The door bursts open.

A ROTUND SILHOUETTE - is revealed, clutching a police special, flashing a badge. A squeaky, over-excited, voice:

BUMSTEAD
Hold it!

Schreber and White FREEZE in mid-struggle, look at the inspector. Behind him, the nurse appears in the hallway.

BUMSTEAD
Police. Nobody move.

SCHREBER
He tried to kill me!

BUMSTEAD
Shut up! Everybody stay calm...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Bumstead steps into the light, shoves his gun in White's face, handcuffs him. Bumstead searches White, finds the revolver, takes this. Also takes his wallet. He glances at the doctor, who hides the syringe behind his back.

BUMSTEAD (to Doctor)
You Schreber?

Schreber nods blankly.

Bumstead runs his hand over White's side pocket - feels something.

BUMSTEAD
What's that?

White says nothing. The inspector opens the pocket and looks in.

BUMSTEAD (disgusted)
A fish, huh?

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

An old-fashioned BLACK SEDAN drives over a rusty suspension bridge. Stone gargoyles look down at the lone vehicle. It's been raining. Streets are empty.

INSIDE THE CAR

WHITE and the INSPECTOR drive silently. Bumstead has appointed his un-marked police vehicle with all the comforts of home. Hot thermos. Note pad holder, complete with light. Coat hanger. Gun rack. A system for everything.

BUMSTEAD
Dammit!
(glances at his watch)
I'm curious? How many so far?

He shakes his watch, puts it to his ear.

WHITE (confused)
What? I...

BUMSTEAD (counts on fingers)
Let's see, there's the little guy with no arms or legs. And the young boy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHITE (disturbed)
Young boy?

CLOSE ON WHITE - frightened now.

BUMSTEAD
The six year old. Sure, you remember.

Bumstead pulls something from under the dashboard. A SANDWICH, carefully wrapped and prepared. After glancing at his watch again, he bites into it.

BUMSTEAD (chewing)
Y'know, the kid you left in the meat packing plant, cut into pieces. Packed into brown paper parcels, wrapped in twine, that kind of thing.

No answer.

BUMSTEAD
You sure have demonstrated a great deal of... imagination. The baby was the best though. Several cops lost their lunch over that one. Head twisted off, spine pulled out, yeech...

WHITE (cuts in)
Stop it. You're making me sick...

BUMSTEAD
We count seven so far. Anyone we missed?

RADIO CRACKLE O.S. - A tinny voice cuts in.

VOICE
Inspector Bumstead... Inspector...

Bumstead picks up a microphone, speaks into it.

BUMSTEAD
What is it, Crenshaw?

CRENSHAW
Just reminding you... your eight pee em...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BUMSTEAD
Dammit.
(looks at watch)
Very efficient, as usual, Crenshaw. Remind me to give you my watch. It needs fixing.

CRENSHAW
Yes sir.

Bumstead replaces the microphone under the dashboard, takes a SHARP CORNER as he finishes off the sandwich.

WHITE
Where are we going?

BUMSTEAD
Shut-up.

Bumstead pulls out a small brush, cleans the fallen crumbs from his trousers, keeping a hand on the wheel.

White is silent - his wounds continue to bother him. He leans down to scratch through his trousers.

WHITE (quietly)
Shit!

BUMSTEAD
Gesundheit!

WHITE (looks up)
I didn't sneeze.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The INSPECTOR's car pulls up and stops.

INSIDE THE CAR

WHITE
What are we doing here?

Bumstead grabs a bunch of flowers off the back seat.

BUMSTEAD
Get out.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

BUMSTEAD pushes the handcuffed WHITE through a swinging metal door. They enter a sterile air-conditioned room. An effeminate MALE NURSE sits behind a glassed-in counter. Directly opposite is a small WAITING ROOM through a glass panelled door. Bumstead pushes White into this room.

BUMSTEAD
Wait here.

The inspector shuts the door behind him. White looks about the blank room, takes a seat. He can see Bumstead, through the glass panel in the door, walk up to the male nurse opposite.

OUT IN THE CORRIDOR

The inspector talks to the male nurse through a tiny opening in the window.

BUMSTEAD
Bumstead. I'm here to see my mother.

BACK TO WHITE

He cannot hear anything of what Bumstead is saying. He sees him take out his wallet and show his badge. The male nurse is concerned, looks over towards White, then opens a drawer, hands Bumstead a KEY. The inspector steps back to the waiting room door and LOCKS IT from the outside. He looks at White for a moment, then walks away, along the corridor.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Bumstead enters darkness - pneumatic MACHINE NOISE fills the gloom. He walks quietly to his mother, encased in a metallic contraption, something like an iron lung.

BUMSTEAD (whisper)
Brought you these.

He places flowers on the bedside table. His mother just stares expressionless into space, in a coma. He sits on a metal chair, looks at the woman. Her life-sustaining machines hiss and breathe.

INT. POLICE STATION

A FINGER presses down on the sticky surface of a page. It pulls away revealing an inky finger-print.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WIDER

White is standing in a bare room, in front of a finger-printing machine. He's alone. A blast of electrical FEED-BACK. White looks up at a speaker mounted to the wall.

MECHANICAL VOICE (through speaker)
Move - forward.

White follows a painted line on the floor, stands against a wall, in front of an old-fashioned camera. A slot opens in the wall behind him, mechanical arms spring forward, restrain him, one arm holds a sign with a number in front of him. A flash goes off, the click of a shutter.

MECHANICAL VOICE
Left - profile.

A claw lowers from the ceiling, grips White's head, turns it abruptly - the camera fires.

MECHANICAL VOICE
Right - profile.

The claw turns his head the other way. The camera fires again.

MECHANICAL VOICE
Move - forward.

Across the room A BUZZER SOUNDS, a red light flashes above a door. White is released by the mechanical hands, walks over, opens the door and steps into darkness.

LIGHTS COME ON - extremely bright. A room for line-ups - markings on the white wall behind White indicate varying heights, a darkened window faces him. He is obviously to be identified by an unseen person.

A buzzer sounds again, a light indicates another door.

VOICE
Move - forward.

White moves into another room. A chair faces a large wheel painted in a black and white spiral. He sits down - the wheel turns, faster and faster.

VOICE
Watch - the - wheel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The wheel stops after several seconds.

VOICE
Move - forward.

The next room is full of scientific equipment.

VOICE
Stand - behind - the - screen.

White sees a metal-frame X-ray machine - he steps across to it. The screen lights up, filling the room with a green glow. We can see the shape of his skeleton. Where his pocket would be, is the tiny skeleton of the fish.

VOICE
Move - forward.

The next room is empty.

VOICE
Face - the - wall.

White turns. As soon as he has done this hears a door open behind him. FOOTSTEPS approach. Blows rain down on him, fists, boots, clubs. He slides to the floor. The lights go out.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

LIGHTS come on again. White is dazed - in a chair, a bright light in his face blinds him.

VOICE
What's your name?

WHITE (squints into light)
I don't remember.

VOICE
Oh, no?

White shakes his head slowly and looks at the floor. The light is angled away, pointed down towards A TABLE. White can see now.

HIS P.O.V.

A featureless room. STROMBOLI stands over him, behind him is BUMSTEAD and two shadowy guards. Bumstead picks up an envelope, removes a SERIES OF PHOTOS, hands these to Stromboli.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STROMBOLI
John...

He throws the first shot down on the table in front of White. A black and white police photo of a murder victim.

STROMBOLI
...Murderer.

Another photo goes down. Another victim. Another and another. Each more grisly than the last.

STROMBOLI
You'll sign a confession?

White nods. He's looks utterly lost.

Bumstead steps across to a small speaker box on the wall near the only door, presses a button.

BUMSTEAD (into speaker)
Okay.

TWO GUARDS immediately step through the door, GRAB White by his arms. They carry him off.

INT. PRISON CELL

White is woken by a UNIFORMED GUARD shining a light in his eyes.

GUARD
Visitor.

INT. VISITING ROOM

White is led into an empty pale green room with a glass barrier down the middle. The guard tells him to sit and wait.

The door on the other side of the barrier opens with a squeak - DOCTOR SCHREBER steps in, looking frightened.

WHITE (to guard)
Keep him away! He's insane.

The guard just smiles, looks at the doctor knowingly.

SCHREBER
Please, stay calm.

CONTINUED:

WHITE (to guard)
This man wants to kill me.

The guard remains indifferent.

SCHREBER (to guard)
Just one of his many delusions - it's nothing.
(a whisper to White)
Shut up! Listen, damn you! This is a fortunate coincidence - we won't get another chance like this. Listen to me.

WHITE (turns to Doctor)
What do you want?

SCHREBER
You're innocent...
(still a whisper)
You didn't kill anyone.

WHITE (sarcastic)
What am I doing in here then?

SCHREBER
Listen to what I have to say. Decide for yourself.

AN ADJOINING ROOM

The dark silhouettes of BUMSTEAD and ANOTHER COP watch from behind a two-way mirror.

BUMSTEAD
What's he doing here?

COP
Says he is the man's doctor...
(taps side of his head)
You know...

BUMSTEAD
I know it's his doctor...
(into intercom)
I need the file on...
(reads clip-board)
...Daniel Paul Schreber M.D.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MISS CRENSHAW'S VOICE O.S.
Schreber. Yes. Isn't that his doctor?

BUMSTEAD (evenly)
Yes.
(beat)
And it's SCHREBER - with an 'h'.

MISS CRENSHAW
Yes. An 'h'.

The inspector looks up from the speaker.

HIS P.O.V. - THROUGH THE MIRROR, White seems to have calmed down.

BACK IN THE VISITING ROOM

SCHREBER
The men in black - they're the killers.

White stands abruptly, pushes himself against the glass.

WHITE
You're a liar!

SCHREBER
No, it's the truth.

WHITE
So you're telling me the truth this time? Is that it!

The doctor removes a SMALL SYRINGE from his black bag, places it on the table in front of the glass, blocks it from the guard's view.

SCHREBER
If you would only take this, inject it in your brain, everything would be much clearer.

WHITE
Not that again...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SCHREBER
Everyone get's one - very much like this...
(points to syringe)
But this one's special. It will help you understand, everything...

WHITE (cuts in)
I'm not injecting anything into my brain.

SCHREBER
Anton - I mean, John, look... there has been an experiment, a dangerous experiment. I arranged it. It was a lie from the beginning. It almost worked, but things did not go as they should have. You have been left - blank.

Schreber waves frantically at the air surrounding him.

SCHREBER
You can change this, <u>all</u> this.
(points at syringe again)
But you <u>must</u> take it.

White stares blankly at him for a moment, then:

WHITE
You've been working too hard.

SCHREBER
Please! Don't be foolish! Time is short. Let me show you something. Look at this syringe.

WHITE
Why?

SCHREBER
Don't ask stupid questions. Look at it.

White reluctantly does this.

SCHREBER
Concentrate. Imagine the syringe rising. Picture it floating above the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TIGHT ON WHITE

SCHREBER
Do it!

WHITE'S P.O.V.

The syringe starts to vibrate, actually RISES INTO THE AIR - floats stationary between White and Schreber.

WHITE
It's a trick.

SCHREBER
No it isn't. You are doing it! Now raise it over the glass and...

Suddenly the syringe spins towards the doctor, IMPALES itself in his shoulder. He yelps, grabs it.

WHITE
Oh, sorry...

The doctor pulls out the syringe, is about to say more when a BUZZER SOUNDS.

MECHANICAL VOICE
Your - time - is - up.

Schreber looks to where the voice came from - a speaker above their heads.

SCHREBER (looks at White)
I gave you your chance, now it's too late. They'll learn you are here soon. It's all over.

INT. POLICE STATION CORRIDOR

DOCTOR SCHREBER paces towards the exit. BUMSTEAD steps in front of him. The doctor is startled.

BUMSTEAD
Doctor! What brings you here?

SCHREBER
Just visiting my patient.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD
Really? And how is his state of mind?

SCHREBER
He's seriously disturbed...

The doctor is nervous, glancing about.

BUMSTEAD
You seem a little edgy. Everything okay?

SCHREBER
Yes, of course. Everything's fine...

He tries to push past. Bumstead grabs his arm.

BUMSTEAD
To tell you the truth, I'm glad we've run into each other like this. Maybe you can help me tidy some loose ends.

SCHREBER
Loose ends?

SCHREBER looks like a trapped animal, when:

VOICE O.S.
Bumstead!

Bumstead turns to look down the corridor. He sees STROMBOLI peaking out of his office door.

STROMBOLI
I need to speak to you. Immediately.

The door shuts again. Bumstead turns back. The doctor is GONE -the corridor empty.

INT. HOLDING CELL

White is staring through a glass door at A COP. A KETTLE WHISTLES O.S. The cop gets up and moves off.

White looks up.

CONTINUED:

HIS P.O.V.

A small WINDOW, high up on the wall. Impossible to get to, even if his hands weren't cuffed. Nothing he can do - he looks at a clock on a wall.

PUSH IN on the clock - TICKING GETS LOUDER.

INT. POLICE STATION

BUMSTEAD enters STROMBOLI'S office. A nervous CHIEF-INSPECTOR is flanked by TWO STRANGE-LOOKING MEN in ill-fitting brown suits.

STROMBOLI
Bumstead, these... er, gentlemen are here to collect White.

Bumstead suspiciously eyes the two men, beside STROMBOLI'S desk.

BUMSTEAD (to men)
Who are you?

STROMBOLI (even more nervous)
Please, Bumstead. Co-operate - it's easier.

BUMSTEAD
This is highly irregular. I have a right to know.

MAN 1
We are from a mental asylum.

He notices that this man's moustache is LOP-SIDED. The other man wears spectacles WITH NO LENSES in the frames, clutches an un-lit pipe in his teeth.

STROMBOLI
Yes. That's right. He's ill - he needs expert help.

BUMSTEAD
I see...

MAN 1
Yes, Inspector. Has he been displaying any strange... behaviour?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD
He's been a little angel...

STROMBOLI
If you could show them to the holding cell now.

SLOW MOVE IN on Bumstead's face.

IN THE CORRIDOR

Bumstead and the MYSTERY MEN walk towards the holding cell. Bumstead glances up through the glass in the door before he enters. IT'S EMPTY.

He fumbles furiously for the key in his pocket - BURSTS into the room. White is gone. But where? Bumstead throws a look back TO THE FRONT DESK.

MAN 1
Where is he?

The cop is just returning, holding a cup of coffee. He looks at the inspector, sees the room is empty. A nervous twitch knocks the cup from the cop's hands.

TIGHT ON THE CUP - smashing on the floor.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Underground. CONSTANT NOISE O.S. of trains arriving and departing but none are seen.

CAMERA MOVES PAST broken tiles on a wall to REVEAL: WHITE - sitting amidst rubbish on the ground, looking around, confused, groggy from sleep. He looks down at his hands, unsuccessfully tries to free them from the cuffs.

MOVE IN TIGHT ON WHITE

He starts to cry. He puts his head in his hands, his body spasms with each sob.

SEVERAL ANGLES of the empty corridors of the subway. White's crying is heard - echoic.

BACK ON WHITE - A small feminine HAND touches his head.

Startled, he throws himself back, like he's about to be attacked.

CONTINUED:

THE BEAUTIFUL JAPANESE WOMAN from the church looks down at him.

INT. POLICE STATION

BUMSTEAD and the COP are getting grilled by STROMBOLI.

BUMSTEAD
Yes, sir. I'm sorry... But I don't understand how it was possible. The only window was twenty feet up a vertical wall, he was cuffed...

STROMBOLI
(shouts at cringing cop)
How could you have been so stupid?

COP
I'm sorry, sir.

STROMBOLI
Alright, get out.

Bumstead gets up and leaves.

STROMBOLI
You stay.

The cop hustles out, shuts the door.

STROMBOLI
Bumstead, you're starting to annoy me. This case is very important to me. Just a little warning: I've got my eye on you inspector, remember that.

BUMSTEAD
Yes, sir.

He leaves.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING

White, awkwardly trying to hide his cuffed hands in his coat, follows the JAPANESE WOMAN up a flight of dark stairs. She keeps looking back at him, smiling but SAYS NOTHING.

INT. APARTMENT

White and the woman step into a run-down apartment. She points to a couch. White looks uncomfortable. She smiles again, then turns on the radio. MUSIC.

She steps into an adjoining bedroom, leaving White alone. He gets up and starts to tune the radio. A babble of fragments of voices and music, then: A NEWS REPORT...

NEWS READER O.S.
...earlier this evening it was reported a man fitting his description had been apprehended.

White listens nervously.

NEWS READER O.S.
...and now for a message from LUMP-O food products...

Across the room he can see the woman's bedroom door ajar. He crosses to the doorway and looks in. The woman stands naked against a deep red wall, her back turned. She has an elaborate TATTOO on her back - looks like an INSECT. She puts on a dressing gown and TURNS SUDDENLY.

White steps back before she notices him, he goes back to the couch.

She steps from the doorway holding a BAR OF SOAP in her hand. She sits down beside White and takes his hands, gently lathering soap around the handcuffs, continuing to smile at him. White looks down.

His hands seem to have SHRUNK - they poke out of his sleeves like tiny children's limbs. The cuffs effortlessly slip off.

White looks at the woman, then back at his hands - NOTHING STRANGE, they are normal size, but somehow the cuffs have been removed. He looks at the woman again, grateful. He can't help smiling.

His P.O.V.

Her eyes. Her lips. Her neck. She leans forward, goes OUT OF FOCUS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANOTHER ANGLE

She touches her tongue to his lips. Kisses his face. She pushes him back on the couch and pulls her dressing gown open. White does not respond - seems uncertain. She sits upright, astride his body, unbuckles his belt, opens his shirt, caresses his chest. She stops, her face in shadow.

Slowly, White lifts his hands to her breasts, touches them. She starts to breath deeply.

OUT OF FOCUS - their bodies entangle, begin to move rhythmically. The CAMERA TRACKS SIDEWAYS, REVEALS a microphone behind a chair, leads us to a mirror on a wall. On the other side of the one-way glass a reel-to-reel tape recorder is picking up the SOUNDS OF HEAVY BREATHING.

OUTSIDE

The building the lovers are in SLOWLY RISES into the air, past taller buildings and floats out over the city. Its shadow moves past empty plazas and across faces of grey towers.

INSIDE

White sleeps, as buildings move past outside the window. He opens his eyes, FORCES himself awake. Looks across the dark room.

The JAPANESE WOMAN stands naked at the window, clutching a large red megaphone. IN PERFECT ENGLISH she shouts down at the streets drifting past.

JAPANESE WOMAN
He's up here! He raped me! Hurry!
Before he kills again!

OUTSIDE

MYSTERY MEN stand on roof-tops, watching the building drift past.

BACK IN THE ROOM

White runs to the window, GRABS the woman. As they struggle, the building is landing softly in another part of the city. LONG SHADOWS move towards the entrance...

WHITE WAKES UP AGAIN - finds he is still on the couch. NO SIGN of the woman. Then he notices her standing by the window (minus megaphone). The wind pulls at her black hair. A distant SIREN O.S.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He gets up, walks over, stands beside her, looks out at the dark city. She ignores him, goes back to the couch, turns on a table-lamp, puts her hands before the lit bulb, casts animal shadows on the wall.

White watches her. He walks across and sits next to her. She points to herself.

WOMAN (a whisper)
Sachiko.

He nods slowly, looks at her. She waits for him to respond with his name. He shrugs, remains silent. Then he puts his hands in the light, makes his own animal shadow.

WHITE
That's me. I'm a shadow.

She smiles at the shadows.

WHITE
Do I look like a murderer to you?

She just keeps smiling, not understanding. Kisses him. He notices an old phone on a corner table, removes the note again and rings the same number. This time, after several rings the call is answered.

WOMAN'S VOICE O.S.
Yes?... Who is this?... Who's there?...

White remains silent. Sachiko stands and leaves the room.

WOMAN'S VOICE O.S.
John? Is that you?

WHITE
Who is this? What do you know about me?

In the darkness of a doorway Sachiko hesitates momentarily. She slides a hand into White's coat, removes the wallet. She takes out some cash, puts the wallet back, then she MOVES OFF.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

BUMSTEAD pulls up in his car. Across the street is DOCTOR SCHREBER'S surgery.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He is about to get out of the car, when the SURGERY DOOR OPENS and A FIGURE steps into the street. Bumstead watches the shadowy man for a moment. Then gets out and FOLLOWS, assuming it is Schreber.

ALLEYWAY

Bumstead follows inconspicuously. Without warning, the figure stops and TURNS. Bumstead backs into a doorway to hide. He gets a glimpse of the gaunt features of a MYSTERY MAN in the dim light of the alley.

When Bumstead steps into the alley again there is no sign of the Man - like he disappeared into thin air. A SHADOW crosses the wall beside Bumstead. He spins, looking around behind him. Then he looks up into the air.

HIS P.O.V.

The shadow of a LEVITATING FIGURE crosses the face of a building.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

SOUND OF A WOMAN SOBBING O.S. A wet dog sits in a corner gnawing a bone. A crackly voice recites a list of names from a small speaker-box mounted to a wall. A TREMBLING FINGER presses a door buzzer.

SACHIKO, opens the door and looks out.

ANGLE ON - A STRANGE WOMAN in the dark corridor adjusting her hair nervously. She pushes past the Japanese woman, into the room.

INSIDE

WOMAN

John.

WHITE stands inside the room, looking at the woman, expressionless. The woman suddenly leaps forward, grabs him, kisses him passionately.

White tries to push her away, but she takes his hand, pulls it inside her dress, makes him touch her breasts. He pushes harder, she trips on a chair, falls to the floor. She starts to cry.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING FACADE

The CAMERA MOVES past flaking bricks - to a window. Behind the glass WHITE and SACHIKO sit across from the WOMAN who attacked White. She is talking, though nothing can be heard, drying her eyes with a handkerchief.

INSIDE

The strange woman looks at White intently between sobs.

WOMAN
Please believe me. It's me, John. Your WIFE. I wouldn't lie to you. You told me I could come and see you - now you want to just send me away again...

White looks AT THE FLOOR.

HIS P.O.V. - a crack in the floorboards - movement underneath.

WHITE
I thought it would make more sense. I'm getting the pieces, but when I put it together it feels wrong... Like you're telling me about somebody else's life...

WIFE
It's the truth... I need you. I know you're innocent.

WHITE
How do you know I'm innocent?

WIFE
Of course you are. You couldn't do those terrible things. Come home with me - maybe things will make sense then...

WHITE
I can't do that. It's dangerous. What about my parents? Do you know where I can find them?

WIFE
They're dead, John.

He stands and walks to the window - looks out at the city.

WIFE
You have an uncle. You were very close.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She fumbles in her handbag, pulls out a notebook, scribbles something on a piece of paper, hands it to White.

WIFE
This is where he lives. I'm sure he would like to see you.

WHITE (taking paper)
Thanks.

WIFE (looks at him for a beat)
Don't you want me? My body? Remember how my skin feels? Touch it. I...

She notices Sachiko - becomes self-conscious. Sachiko silently stands and leaves the room. The wife puts her face in her hands, overcome with tears.

WHITE
What's your name?

WIFE (looks up - still sobbing)
Elizabeth.

White removes the torn fragment of the photograph he has in his wallet, holds the black and white eye up to her face -it matches.

WHITE (thoughtful)
Yes...

In the darkness of a doorway Sachiko watches the couple. She MOVES OFF.

ELIZABETH
I want to help...

WHITE
Alright. Here...

He pulls the postcard from his wallet, holds it up so the woman can see it.

WHITE
Know this place?

She looks at the card.

ELIZABETH (stops crying)
Of course. Your home town - where you grew up...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

White stands abruptly, startling the woman. He glares down at her intensely.

WHITE
How do I get there? Tell me.

WIFE
That's easy. You...

She trails off into silence. Her hand, about to point in a certain direction, freezes in mid-air.

ELIZABETH
...strange, I forgot.

White sits back down quietly.

WHITE
Yes. Very strange.

INT. BATHROOM

Sachiko locks the door behind her and steps to the middle of the room, lifts a small round rug off the tiled floor. Underneath is a TRAP-DOOR. Opening it, she climbs down a hole.

UNDER THE FLOOR

In the semi-darkness she moves to a WOODEN BOX. She cranks a small metal handle on the box which makes the lid open. Music plays softly.

She looks into the yawning black mouth of the box. A WORM-LIKE apparition threads its way out of the hole, wraps about her thigh. She breaths deeply, shuts her eyes.

INT. TENEMENT BUILDING CORRIDOR

LOW ANGLE TRACKING SHOT - feet walk along a tattered rug, approach a door. Bumstead's shoes, shiny as always.

INT. TENEMENT ROOM

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR startles a huddled man in a blanket, sitting before a small t.v. set. This is THOMPSON - the detective with mental problems. He's unshaven, haunted. Clutching a shotgun, he steps to the door, peeks through a spy-hole.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIS P.O.V.

Bumstead, back turned, glancing at his watch.

Thompson backs away, points his gun at the figure through the door.

THOMPSON
Go away!

BUMSTEAD O.S.
Open up, Thompson. It's me...

Thompson puts his eye to the door again.

THOMPSON
Bumstead?

THROUGH THE SPY-HOLE LENS the inspector turns, looks at us, his face DISTORTED, fish-like. Thompson undoes four locks, opens the door a crack, but leaves it chained.

THOMPSON
Can't let you in... sorry.

BUMSTEAD
I'm on the serial killer case, need to talk.

THOMPSON
Not that. Anything else.

Thompson wipes at the sweat on his forehead.

BUMSTEAD
You don't look so well... C'mon, let me in Thompson.

Thompson stares at Bumstead, then silently unchains the door and lets him through.

THOMPSON
I can't talk about <u>that</u>. As long as you understand, that's all.

The room is very dark. Bumstead is assailed by a wave of putrid smells. It's a mess - rotten food, overturned furniture, dirty clothes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THOMPSON
Pull up some garbage - make yourself at home.

Thompson smiles weakly. They sit down, face each other in the gloom. A RAT scuttles past Thompson. With lightning reflexes he throws a shoe at it. The rat runs under a table. He looks back at Bumstead, smiles, slightly insane.

THOMPSON
They've taken my mind, my memories...

BUMSTEAD
What? Who has?

THOMPSON
Is that your idea of a joke? I don't remember...
(looks around)
Take my advice, Bumstead. Get off this case. Now.

BUMSTEAD
What is going on?

THOMPSON (looks more frightened)
Wish I could tell you, Bumstead. Strange business. I...
AAAAAAAHHHHHHHH!

He screams horribly. Stands, clutching his head. Startled, Bumstead falls backwards off his chair. Thompson, still clutching his head, runs and starts POUNDING HIS FACE against the wall.

THOMPSON
Get away! Leave me alone!

Thompson's head is CHANGING - bloating. It rapidly elongates into a pink fleshy tube.

Thompson's head continues to grow - his features are lost beneath folds of skin. His screaming is stifled. Thompson falls to the floor. His head HUGE NOW - larger than his body. Small tendrils sprout from the main appendage.

Bumstead takes cover behind a sofa.

Then, as violently as the head began to transform, it stops.

CONTINUED: (3)

Bumstead peaks over the sofa at the huge throbbing purple growth sprouting from Thompson's collar. At the top of the growth an orifice opens.

An EXPLOSION of green bile spouts into the room - covers everything in sight...

Then the head starts to shrink. Thompson's features appear again. It returns to normal size. Thompson groans, sprawled on the floor, clutching his head.

Bumstead looks on in horror.

THOMPSON
It's - it's disgusting, I know...

Thompson's face is heavily bruised, covered in sweat. His nose starts to bleed - he wipes it on his sleeve.

BUMSTEAD
Jesus! We have to get you to a doctor...

THOMPSON
No... No doctor...

Bumstead stands unsteadily.

BUMSTEAD
But... How long has this been happening?

THOMPSON
A few days... a few weeks - dunno, I can't remember.
(stands slowly)
Worse thing is, I never know if it will change back again... Now, please leave me alone.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

WHITE, ELIZABETH and SACHIKO sit around a small table, eating quietly.

Without warning, Elizabeth starts to cry again. White tries to ignore her. Sachiko looks sadly at the wife, puts a hand on her shoulder, gives her a handkerchief. The woman quietens down.

They resume eating but in no time Elizabeth again bursts into tears. White looks at her now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIZABETH (through sobs)
Sorry...

Sachiko leans across and puts her arm around Elizabeth, helps her to her feet. Elizabeth hangs onto the woman as she is led from the room. White can hear the sobbing still, as the women move through to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

They sit on the edge of the bed - Sachiko holds Elizabeth's hand, smiles at her.

ELIZABETH (calmer now)
I'm sorry... This is embarrassing - my husband doesn't know who I am...
With this, she starts to cry again.

Sachiko leans forward and tenderly kisses Elizabeth's lips.

INT. DARK CHAMBER - NIGHT

TIGHT ON TWO MYSTERY MEN speaking in whispers. The Men continue talking as THE CAMERA RISES, through several levels of concrete and machinery TO REVEAL:

EXT. ROOF-TOP - NIGHT

OTHER MYSTERY MEN are rigging a wire to some kind of antenna device.

BACK DOWN IN THE DARK CHAMBER

The group of MYSTERY MEN have gathered once again. One addresses them all.

MYSTERY MAN
The line of junction between two edges!

MEN (unison)
YES!

MYSTERY MAN
We have located him. Now is the time, yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A switch is thrown. Electricity sparks to life. A hum is in the air.

MYSTERY MAN
Let the tuning commence!

The congregation of MEN place ELECTRODES to their foreheads in a trance-like manner. They chant, quietly at first, steadily building in volume. The MEN stand and MOVE RHYTHMICALLY to some inner beat.

The CAMERA MOVES ACROSS to a diagram pinned on a board. A representation of a man's legs. Trousers rolled up above the knees, showing a number of bite-like wounds on the flesh. Labels point out various parts of the legs in medical fashion -the legends are an unknown language.

ON THE ROOF

The antenna glows with a ghostly green light. O.S. SCREAMS RISE UP FROM THE STREET.

INT. APARTMENT/KITCHEN - LATER

White downs a cup of black coffee, staring blankly out the window. O.S. distant screams.

He glances across to a wall, notices A FLY there - something about it looks WRONG.

FLY'S P.O.V.

A distorted electronic image of White's FACE looming up.

At exactly that moment the FLY TAKES OFF, flies erratically down the hall, around a turn and disappears. White follows.

HALL-WAY

White moves quietly towards the bedroom door.

HIS P.O.V.

It is ajar, dark inside. Movement. The women are naked on the bed. The JAPANESE WOMAN has her eyes shut, head back in ecstasy. The WIFE is bent over her, kissing her stomach.

ANGLE ON WHITE - watching through the crack in the door. The women are oblivious.

(CONTINUED) -

CONTINUED:

He moves away slowly, feeling strange. His feet stop making contact with the floor. He grabs a table to steady himself. The table-cloth comes away, things spill to the floor and smash. He's FLOATING.

White desperately reaches out to grab something, holds the light-fixture in the ceiling. It breaks off in a cloud of plaster. Sparks briefly illuminate. He falls heavily ONTO THE CEILING -now the floor. The apartment is upside down.

He stares up at furniture and objects.

THE BATHROOM

White steps into the room, eerily illuminated by a glowing heater stuck to the floor. Water is running - filling the tub and overflowing, making a suspended puddle above White's head.

White takes off his clothes and climbs the wall, towards the floor. Its difficult, but he reaches the tap, turns it off. Pulls himself towards the tub.

Gravity becomes NORMAL AGAIN as he sinks in the warm water. He's incredibly weak - floats limply in the bath. Submerges his face. A distant throbbing O.S., like a huge machine heart somewhere in the building.

He opens his eyes, still underwater, stares up at the ceiling.

HIS P.O.V.

A blurry DARK FIGURE moves into his vision. It stares down at him.

White rigid with fright, cannot focus on the figure through the thin veil of water. The FIGURE reaches out. A GLOVED HAND grabs White about the throat, holds him forcefully. White gulps for air, swallows water. His eyes widen. He tries to stop the hand strangling him but can't.

Suddenly the hand pulls away. The BLURRY FIGURE stumbles back and ERUPTS into bloody explosion. The body splits apart, throwing internal organs through the room.

White awakens in the bathtub. He looks about the room. Empty. Silent. He gets out of the water, starts to dress.

EXT. BUILDING

BUMSTEAD'S car pulls up. He gets out, stained here and there with bile.

INT. APARTMENT

A HIGH ANGLE on the slain bodies of the JAPANESE WOMAN and WHITE'S WIFE. TWO COPS wander about the dark room, doing stuff. Bumstead walks up to the cop in charge.

COP
All the same entry wounds. It's definitely him.
(indicates Sachiko's corpse)
She lives... lived here. A prostitute.

BUMSTEAD
The other one?

COP
His wife.

BUMSTEAD
Jesus. Small world.
(looks around)
Where's the photographer?

COP
No one available.

A third YOUNG COP steps up to the cop in charge, glancing at the bile on Bumstead's suit.

YOUNG COP
They won't come out.

COP
We'll interrogate them anyway.

The cop leads Bumstead behind a WOODEN PARTITION. A small area neatly arranged - a double bed, various possessions. Someone obviously lives here. The room is empty however.

COP
This is the family of the victim - apparently they were in the apartment when he committed...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD (looks around empty room)
What are you talking about?

COP
Oh, yes...

He walks to THE BED, bends over and lifts the bed-spread. In the shadows underneath, Bumstead can make out SEVERAL FACES. A man, an old woman, three or four children.

COP
They don't speak English...

BUMSTEAD
How will we interrogate them?

COP
Well, sir... I don't know exactly.

Under the bed, Bumstead can see a LITTLE GIRL. He walks over to her. She puts a hand over her mouth, edges away.

BUMSTEAD
It's alright. I won't hurt you.

Without coming out from under the bed she hands the inspector a crumpled paper. He looks at it then glances over his shoulder.

HIS P.O.V.

The wooden room divider. The CAMERA MOVES IN steadily, into a crack running along the length of the divider - we can see the room on the other side, with the cops moving about.

Bumstead looks back at the page he holds in his hands.

HIS P.O.V.

A child-like DRAWING. Two men, stick figures, dressed in black, with impossibly big knifes, slash at two screaming women.

Unmistakable - MYSTERY MEN.

INT. DARK CHAMBER - NIGHT

DOCTOR SCHREBER walks stiffly into the room and sits at the head of a boardroom table. He's cold, pulls his coat up about his neck. The long table is lined on both sides with immobile MYSTERY MEN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A DARK FIGURE walks into the room, steps up to the other end of the table. This is the enigmatic MISTER BLACK - only ever seen hidden in shadow.

MISTER BLACK (addressing Men)
Gentlemen.
(peers at Schreber)
Doctor.

He sits, dark and mysterious.

MISTER BLACK
I have called this meeting for a purpose, yes?
(turns to Schreber)
It is clear to you we are - unhappy, yes?

SCHREBER
Yes, of course. I...

MISTER BLACK
The tuning failed - when our agents arrived he was gone. He knows things -predicts things. Explain to us, Doctor. Why is the situation this way? Yes?

Schreber seems distinctly uncomfortable.

SCHREBER
I'm not certain I fully understand myself...

MISTER BLACK
No excuses, dearest Doctor! Answers. Yes?

MYSTERY MEN (chant in unison)
Answers! Answers!

MISTER BLACK
You said this would be containable! Nothing works this time. Why is this so?

MYSTERY MEN
Why! Why!

SCHREBER
I - ah - I... it's a little cold in here don't you think?

CONTINUED: (2)

MISTER BLACK
We must find him. This is your responsibility.

SCHREBER (thinking fast)
Yes, of course...

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE

Bumstead once again scratches his head in front of a map. The little girl's drawing is pinned to his board. His attention wanders. He notices a FLY CRAWLING across the wall in front of his face. He leans closer, studying it.

The intercom crackles to life. The insect flies off.

MISS CRENSHAW (through intercom)
A call, sir.

BUMSTEAD
Who is it?

MISS CRENSHAW
Won't say. Says he must talk to you.

BUMSTEAD
Put it through...

A light flashes. Bumstead picks up.

BUMSTEAD
This is Bumstead. Who is this?

He listens intently.

INT. BUMSTEAD'S OFFICE

BUMSTEAD enters. He looks nervous. His SECRETARY sits at her desk in an adjoining office, filing her nails.

BUMSTEAD
I need everything on the Jonathan White case.

MISS CRENSHAW
Yes, sir. Everything?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD
All the important stuff. Wrap it up for me.

The inspector turns to face her, a little manic. She is staring at him.

BUMSTEAD
Please - I'm in a hurry.

MISS CRENSHAW (evenly)
Certainly.

EXT. POLICE STATION

BUMSTEAD steps from the doorway and walks across to his car briskly.

INT. BATH-HOUSE

Bumstead moves down a long corridor full of people in towels and swimming outfits, waiting silently. They sit lined by a wall, staring into space.

Bumstead walks into a large, tiled room, full of steam. He walks beside a heated pool - naked people swim about weakly or sit on the edge washing themselves. He steps up to A FULLY DRESSED MAN, sitting silently on a bench. It is WHITE.

A feint smile brushes across White's lips as he looks up at the inspector. He looks away, like he's forgotten something. Stands, walks over to the pool, cups his hand, bends down, scoops some water.

Bumstead sees White has picked up the LITTLE SILVER FISH.

BUMSTEAD
Why give yourself up?

WHITE
I - ah - couldn't think of anything else to do. I thought maybe you know something...
(beat)
I'm scared.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD
That was a pretty good escape act at the station. How did you do that?

WHITE
I woke up in a subway. I don't know how I got there.

BUMSTEAD (not convinced)
Uh-huh.
(pauses)
What are you scared of?

WHITE
People... after me.

BUMSTEAD
Who?

WHITE
I don't know who they are.

BUMSTEAD
Why are they after you?

WHITE
Don't know that either.

BUMSTEAD
Don't know much, do you?

INT. LABORATORY - NIGHT

Metal scraping.

PIANO ACCORDION MUSIC wafts on a breeze, Someone breathing.

HIGH ANGLE - Down through an OPENING metal hatch. A dim laboratory IS REVEALED - a maze of scientific instruments. Elongated shadows move about.

MYSTERY MEN are hunched over something. Behind them a diagrammatic chart of the evolution of the human brain.

MAN 1 bends across to a CONTROL PANEL, works a switch. A small speaker in a metal box crackles to life. SOUND OF DISTANT SURF. A WOMAN'S VOICE:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE
What is your name... What is your name...

Wires lead from the metal box to a HUMAN BRAIN within a metallic container. Electricity arches across electrodes. More sounds from the speaker: WATER BUBBLING. HIGH HEELS WALK DOWN STAIRS. BED-SPRINGS. LOVERS MOAN PASSIONATELY.

MAN 2 steps forward and pulls a bloodied sheet from their handiwork.

A PUPPET-LIKE CREATURE is revealed. Small - two and half feet tall. The top of its head an open hatch containing the BRAIN. Wires lead to this.

TIGHT ON PUPPET'S EYES - They glance about the room. Its body is a series of geometric shapes and polished surfaces.

MAN 1 shines a torch into the puppet's eyes.

INSIDE IT'S HEAD

Gears turn, illuminated by the beam of the light. The gears part slowly to reveal a small writhing INSECT screwed to a metal plate.

MAN 2 shows the puppet PHOTOGRAPHS: WHITE as he looks currently, shots of him as a teenager, a young boy, a baby. Photos of what we realise are his parents, standing on a seaside pier smiling and waving. Where he went to school. A red push-bike he owned as a boy. His first sweetheart. Then a photo of a young woman smiling - his WIFE.

MAN 3 holds up a small sea shell to the mechanical ear of the puppet creature - MORE SOUNDS OF SURF...

A FIGURE clutching a wooden cane looks on from the shadows. His pale hand fondles the ornate handle of his cane - a carved silver insect. It's MISTER BLACK. Man 3 steps up to him.

MISTER BLACK
You have duplicated the personality, yes.

MAN 3
It is ready. The Doctor was most helpful.

Mister Black turns towards the OTHER MEN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MISTER BLACK
I hear a clock in my head, and I like it!

MEN (respond in unison)
We hear clocks in our heads, and we like it!

MISTER BLACK
A world in our likeness!

MEN
A world in our likeness!

The Men close the hatch in the top of the puppet's head. SQUEAK... CLUNK! The puppet tests out its MANY WEAPONS, a series of nasty-looking blades snap out of its small body, then retract.

INT. INSPECTOR'S APARTMENT

Bumstead leads White through the front door, into a SITTING ROOM. Everything is extremely neat and organized, plastic coverings on all the furniture. White steps towards a sofa.

BUMSTEAD
Please. Not that way. If you could just follow the covering - the carpet gets stained and it's impossible to clean.

White stops. Bumstead indicates a CLEAR PLASTIC MAT running through the room.

BUMSTEAD
Everything the department knows about John White is in this. Here.
(hands file)
Excuse me for a moment.

White flips through it. Details of White's history.

IN THE BEDROOM

Bumstead removes an empty suitcase from a closet. Begins to place neatly folded clothes within it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD (calling to White)
Age thirty one. Brown hair. Green eyes. Five feet, ten and a half inches tall. Until recently worked for a firm manufacturing scientific equipment. Wife's name - Elizabeth. Father and mother - Harold and Edith. Both dead. A history of mental instability... etcetera, etcetera.

Bumstead walks back into the sitting room, packed bag in hand. He looks at White leafing through the file.

BUMSTEAD
That stuff helpful?

WHITE (disappointed)
I suppose...
(looks up)
Why are you helping me?

BUMSTEAD
You're case has been driving me crazy. You see, I pride myself on being thorough. There's too many loose ends with your case.
(a beat)
Thought it was best you were hidden until we understand more about the facts. What do you know about these men in black?

White looks up, pauses as if he didn't understand Bumstead, then:

WHITE
If you shoot them here...
(points at his forehead)
...you can kill them. They're not people - like us - got insects in their heads... Got any disinfectant?

The inspector is caught off-guard by the question.

WHITE (continues)
It's my legs. Been bitten. Giving me trouble.

Bumstead walks silently to the bathroom, opens a medicine cabinet.

HIS P.O.V. - a neat arrangement of bottles and jars.

CONTINUED: (2)

BUMSTEAD (to himself)
Insects?

He returns clutching a small bottle and some cotton wool.

BUMSTEAD
Here.
(hands things to White)
Careful with your trousers. That stuff stains.

The inspector gives White back his revolver and his wallet.

BUMSTEAD
Here.

Bumstead paces thoughtfully, careful to stay on the plastic protective covering. He turns, glares at White, who dabs his legs with the cotton wool.

BUMSTEAD
Any idea what part the Doctor plays in this business?

White shakes head.

BUMSTEAD
Let's try and find out, shall we.
(points at White's shoe)
Lace is untied.

White looks down. Bumstead doesn't lie.

INT. DRUG STORE - NIGHT

The BARBER is shaving under the armpit of a client. GRANDPA snores in a corner, his feet buried under a pile of hair clippings..

The BELL hanging above the door rings. The door swings open.

BARBER
Be with you shortly, sir...

Several heads turn, THEN LOOK DOWN to see the PUPPET. The puppet wheels forward and stops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBER (not really looking)
Hello, sonny. Cute outfit. Mother get it for you?

The puppet crosses the room threateningly. TWO OTHER CLIENTS look up startled from their newspapers and girly magazines.

ON THE PUPPET - it wheels up to the barber's leg and GRABS HIS TROUSER with a mechanical claw. The puppet holds out a PHOTO OF White.

PUPPET (incoherent obscenities)
EEEEEEEEK... AHHHHHHH!...
SHHHHIIIITTTT!... FUUUUUCKER!!!

BARBER (looks down, scarred now)
Huh?

He's grabbed and THROWN into a nearby chair. The puppet leaps onto the bench in front of him - he's frightened, so are the customers.

Puppet wheels up and down on the bench in front of the customers -stopping to glance at individuals in a threatening manner, holding out the photo of White.

It leans forward, spinning its blades - HAIR FLIES. Screams O.S.

The PUPPET retracts it's weapons - COVERED in blood. It wheels forward, through the door and into the street.

THE CAMERA PANS to reveal a scene of complete carnage. Blood covers the walls. FOUR BODIES slumped about the room. Each has an outlandish hairstyle.

INT. BUMSTEAD'S CAR

White looks at the inspector - street lights pass over his features. Bumstead stares at the road.

BUMSTEAD
I didn't tell you the entire reason I helped you. It started with two little girls. Twins. Used to play with them when I was young. Couldn't remember for the life of me what they looked like, then I understood why...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks at the dashboard, brushes away a small piece of lint.

BUMSTEAD
They didn't have faces.

WHITE
What?

BUMSTEAD
That's right. Just seamless flesh across the front of their heads. No mistake. I just hadn't remembered it that way. Up until then they had been normal little girls in my memory.
(looks back at White)
That's not all. Once I started examining them, all sorts of things about my life, had... inconsistencies. It was like a game. I would think about a person or a place, or an event. Then I would turn the lights off. Sit down in a comfortable chair... And study each detail of this subject.

He glances at White, then back to the road.

BUMSTEAD
Everything was liquid beneath a thin surface that had always seemed solid to me...

Bumstead and White are quiet momentarily, then:

BUMSTEAD
Is there anything you haven't told me about this business? Even the most insignificant thing?

WHITE (thinking)
No. Nothing I can think of. Except...

BUMSTEAD
Go on.

WHITE
Well. The only thing I've been certain of, all this time, is that I need to get to the ocean. The point is no one seems to know how to get there.

CONTINUED: (2)

BUMSTEAD
Why, that's ridiculous. You just...

He trails off. Shakes his head slowly.

BUMSTEAD
We'll get to the bottom of this. I mean it.

INT. SCHREBER'S SURGERY

The doctor is sitting at his desk, when the door bursts open suddenly. White and Bumstead move into the room and grab the doctor before he can protest.

BUMSTEAD
I met a friend of yours the other night, doctor. Tall fellow. No hair. Rather pale skin...

SCHREBER
I don't know what you're talking about.

BUMSTEAD
That's surprising. He was leaving your office at the time...

SCHREBER
You are mistaken.

WHITE
What are you hiding?

SCHREBER
Nothing. I don't know anything!

BUMSTEAD removes his revolver, sticks it in the doctor's face.

SCHREBER
Please, they'll kill me...

BUMSTEAD
I think it's time you introduced us to your little friends.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

SCHREBER, BUMSTEAD AND WHITE sit in Bumstead's car in an alleyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Schreber points to a SOLITARY METAL DOOR in a wall.

SCHREBER
In there.

BUMSTEAD
Just like that?

The threesome step from the car, keep close to a wall.

Schreber alone steps up to the door, leans down to a mat at the foot of the door, lifts it and takes a KEY from underneath. He unlocks the door, opens it, puts the key back, goes inside. He waves the other men forward.

White and Bumstead step up to the door - Bumstead looks at the mat - it says: WELCOME on it.

A CORRIDOR

Through the door - AN ELEVATOR. There is only a down button. Schreber presses it, several seconds later the doors open.

They step inside. The doors close, the lift descends.

BUMSTEAD
What is this place?

SCHREBER
You wouldn't believe me if I told you, Inspector. Have patience - you'll see for yourself.

When the doors open again the three men look out on a DARK PASSAGEWAY.

EXT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

The PUPPET wheels up to the sweeping set of stairs at the base of the building. It stops, WHEELS BUMP into the steps repeatedly. It looks down and shrieks with a string of mechanical obscenities.

INT. MYSTERY MEN'S UNDERWORLD

WHITE and BUMSTEAD follow SCHREBER down a corridor to what appears to be an ancient crypt. They enter a door - it has something written on it in a strange language.

CONTINUED:

INSIDE IS A ROOM

They stumble around in the darkness, Schreber finds a light switch, suddenly White STOPS dead in his tracks - Bumstead turns to him.

WHITE
Look.

White points to a wall featuring a line of brass hooks. On these hooks hang MYSTERY MEN coats - that's not all. Each hook carries A FACE.

Bumstead and White step closer, look at the faces. They seem to be elaborate, very life-like MASKS.

SCHREBER
Put them on.

White and the inspector look at each other, incredulous.

OUTSIDE - THE CORRIDOR

The door opens. White, Bumstead and Shreber step out, wearing poorly fitting masks and coats - DISGUISED AS MYSTERY MEN.

FURTHER ALONG THE CORRIDOR

The three men come across a small area with a raised platform, between arches. A number of OPEN CARTS roll past on tracks -the scene resembles some bizarre amusement-park ride. The carts are numbered on the side - all of them empty.

SCHREBER
Get in. Hurry.

White, Bumstead and Schreber hop aboard. The cart takes them into a DARK TUNNEL, deeper into the secret underworld of the MYSTERY MEN. They MOVE THROUGH a subterranean landscape of unexplained contraptions and bones.

WHITE
(to Bumstead)
Where do you think this goes?

BUMSTEAD
It sure isn't the fun-fair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The cart finally comes to a stop in a cave. Bumstead, White and Schreber leap out and hide in a dark doorway, as a LONG LINE OF MYSTERY MEN walk past them.

SCHREBER
Follow me, and do exactly as I do.

They join the end of the line, falling into step.

INT. DARK CHAMBER

The MEN, with WHITE, BUMSTEAD and SCHREBER in tow, enter and sit in a number of rows of wooden chairs. White and the inspector do the same.

MORE MYSTERY MEN appear in circular portals high up on the concrete walls. ONE MAN faces the others at the front of the room.

MYSTERY MAN 1
Eleven past eleven - the Night of the Eye.

The seated Men start to CHANT.

MEN
NIGHT OF THE EYE! NIGHT OF THE EYE!

A MAN in the front row stands.

MAN 2
The Eye is too small for the head of the pin!

MAN 1
Yes!

ANOTHER MAN stands. Next to the first, who sits again.

MAN 3
What is it that floats on the water? The Eye!

MAN 1
Indeed!

So it goes around the room, each Man takes his turn announcing part of the strange ritual. It will be White, Bumstead and Schreber's turn shortly. White is worried, looks at the others.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHITE (whisper)
What do we do?

SCHREBER (hisses back)
Fake it!

BUMSTEAD
What?

SCHREBER is next - he stands abruptly.

SCHREBER
The eye. Master of time and space!

Then it's Bumstead's turn.

BUMSTEAD
The Eye - um - delicious with horseradish on rye!

MAN 1 at the front seems confused for a moment - SEVERAL of the others turn towards Bumstead.

MAN 1 (uncertain)
Good.

The inspector sits back down - whispers to White without looking at him.

BUMSTEAD
Nothing to it...

White stands. Hesitates. Then:

WHITE
Eye... eye, captain!

White sits down, shaking his head, embarrassed.

MAN 1
Um - yes...

THE MAN NEXT TO WHITE rises up - keeps rising, FLOATS IN THE AIR above the Men's heads.

MAN 4
My spine will bend for the Eye!

He turns sideways, still floating.

EXT. ALLEY

BACK ABOVE GROUND, Bumstead, White and Schreber run from the door at the end of the alley-way, tossing their masks away.

BUMSTEAD
Was that for real down there?

SCHREBER
I'm afraid so.

The inspector stops walking suddenly, grabs White, holds him back.

BUMSTEAD
What the hell is that?

At the end of the alley the PUPPET advances menacingly. Schreber takes his chance and runs down an alley and disappears.

BUMSTEAD
Quick. My car.

Fortunately BUMSTEAD'S CAR stands nearby. The two men leap in, start it up. Bumstead guns towards the puppet standing in the glare of the headlights.

The puppet's head opens, a TINY PROPELLER pops out, spins, lifting the puppet into the air. The car passes beneath it at speed. Screeches off into a street, races along between tall buildings.

INSIDE THE CAR

WHITE
What now?

BUMSTEAD
This ocean business... I know where I can find a map. I need to go back to the station. Where will you be?

White thinks for a moment, pulls the paper his wife gave him from his pocket.

WHITE
I'll go see an uncle of mine.
(reading)
Five - one - eight - three - double six -three...

Bumstead scribbles on the pad mounted to the dash, battles with the wheel, driving at breakneck speed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD
Good.
(looks in rear mirror)
Uh-oh...

White turns and looks behind them.

HIS P.O.V. - HEADLIGHTS gaining on them.

ON THE PUPPET - sitting AT THE WHEEL of a stolen car, driving like crazy.

BACK IN BUMSTEAD'S CAR

White takes out his gun - AIMS at the rapidly approaching car.

WHITE (remembers)
It's empty.

BUMSTEAD
Take mine.

Bumstead pulls a gun out of his coat. They swap.

The puppet PULLS ALONGSIDE, a mechanical arm extends towards Bumstead's front tire. A SPINNING BLADE extends from the end of the mechanical arm.

PUPPET
ARRRRRRRRGGGHHHH!... HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!!

TIGHT ON THE BLADE heading for the spinning wheel. White fires. Shells hit the PUPPET'S car, shattering windows.

THE BLADE cuts into the tire - it pops loudly, goes flat, metal SPARKS off the road.

White is thrown forward, hits his head on the dash. Bumstead fights to keep control, SWERVES into the side of the other vehicle, making it scrape a concrete wall, hits garbage cans flying.

The PUPPET'S car falls behind - then swerves off into a side-street and disappears.

BUMSTEAD (looks behind him)
Where did it go?

(CONTINUED).

CONTINUED: (2)

WHITE (looks back also)
Don't know.

Both look FORWARD AGAIN - to see the PUPPET'S CAR pull out in front of them, BLOCKING THE WAY. Bumstead's car is going too fast. Slams the breaks.

TIGHT ON PUPPET - Screaming with insane joy as Bumstead's car approaches like a bullet.

INSIDE INSPECTOR'S CAR

BUMSTEAD
Jump!

Bumstead rips the phone number from the pad. two men LEAP. The car continues onwards.

CRASH! KA-BOOM!

In the glow of the flaming wrecks, the two men pick themselves up from different sides of the street. Look at each other, turn and head in OPPOSITE directions.

CAMERA MOVES IN on mangled metal - a MECHANICAL CLAW starts to pull itself from the wreckage.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

White steps up to a SMALL DOOR in the side of a building. A sign above the door depicts an underwater scene, crammed with fish, sea-weed, bubbles floating to the surface. Dominating everything is a GREEN MAN with scales - a KING NEPTUNE-type.

INSIDE

White stops in front of a ticket booth, beside a faded blue curtain. In the booth a TICKET SELLER is snoring with his mouth hanging open, his head sagging. White knocks on the window. The man wakes with a start.

TICKET SELLER
Yeah. That's what I said!
(looks at White -
rubs head)
What..?

WHITE
I'm looking for this address.

(CONTINUED).

CONTINUED:

The man squints at the card White holds up, nods groggily.

TICKET SELLER
Upstairs. Through there.

He thumbs the blue curtain. Curls up, shuts his eyes again.

BEYOND THE CURTAIN

A dark room full of BUBBLING NOISES AND WATER DRIPPING - an aquarium.

Several corridors meander between large glass panels that look into illuminated tanks of sea creatures.

White moves past a shadowy doorway. He can barely make out STAIRS.

INT. HALL-WAY

White moves cautiously in the darkness. On a door a tiny NAMEPLATE says: K. WHITE. The door is unlocked. He opens it and goes in.

INSIDE

An entrance hall of an apartment. A large number of MOUNTED FISH of all sizes line the hall.

PHOTOS on the wall - family portraits. White examines these, concentrates on one in particular - a young boy on a red push-bike, in the background a sign with a faded image of a girl in a bathing suit: WELCOME TO BLUMBVILLE! it says.

A strange WHIRRING NOISE O.S. White hides behind a sofa. Whatever is making the whirring noise moves past slowly. White cannot see what it is.

VOICE O.S.
John?

White turns to see an OLD MAN in his pyjamas sitting in a WHEELCHAIR. The man pushes a lever on the side of the chair. A whir of electric motors. The chair carries him out of the shadows. White steps from behind the sofa.

MAN
Are you alright? What are you doing here? Is this one of your jokes, John? It's been so long, I thought you'd forgotten your Uncle Karl?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHITE
Uncle... Karl.

INT. AIR-CONDITION DUCT

A P.O.V. - MOVING THROUGH a dark, claustrophobic pipe. TWISTING around tight corners, DARTING down straight lengths of ducting. Dim light spills from wire grills spaced along the walls.

WE TRAVEL up to one grill, at the end of a long stretch of tunnel -stop, nowhere left to go. We can see through the gaps in the wire, looking down into...

THE ROOM

White and Uncle Karl are having a SLIDE-SHOW. Shots of a recent vacation - the uncle doing a series of mundane things.

KARL (chuckling)
Not often I get a chance to show these.

He changes the slide: an image of him standing against a brick wall.

KARL
And this is me again about - um - I would guess about twelve feet further to the right of the last shot. Now just behind the wall is the hotel I stayed at - sweet little place...

The PHONE RINGS. Uncle Karl wheels over, picks up the receiver.

KARL (talks down the line)
Hello... Yes, he's here...
(holds out the phone to White)
It's for you.

White concerned - takes the phone.

WHITE
Yes?
(he listens)
Oh, it's you... Yes... My uncle apparently... Just looking at some memories... You have? That's good.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Bumstead talks to White on the phone. He stands in a dark room, surrounded by charts and maps.

BUMSTEAD
At first I thought there was no way to get to the ocean... The buildings are a barrier, no windows, no doors -everything just, well, ends - only thing would be drill a hole. But then, I saw it, one door, just one... Inside a tenement building...

Bumstead is interrupted by a NOISE O.S. He looks to a frosted partition - dark figures walk past on the other side. He quickly sorts through SEVERAL MAPS, making as little noise as he can.

BUMSTEAD (whisper)
We can meet later - but first I have to do something. Look I got to go...

CUT BACK TO:

White holds THE PHONE, listens to Bumstead on the other end.

WHITE
Where can we meet?... Alright. Good...

As White hangs up he notices A DOOR behind a big old crockery cupboard. The cupboard has been pushed up against the wall, hiding the door.

BACK IN THE POLICE STATION

BUMSTEAD quickly folds the map and shoves it into his pocket. As he turns and runs from the room we NOTICE A DARK FIGURE standing behind a shelf in the room.

IN UNCLE KARL'S APARTMENT

UNCLE KARL continues to change slides - the noise echoing about the room. White moves over and sits down next to him.

KARL
Look! This is a good one!

WHITE
What is that door?

(CONTINUED).

CONTINUED:

KARL
Which one?

WHITE
There. Behind the cabinet. Where does it go?

The uncle watches the slides.

KARL
Such a joker! Like your father.

WHITE
No. Have a look.

He leads the old man over to the cabinet.

WHITE
You see it?

KARL
Yes.

WHITE
Where does it lead?

KARL
It must be a closet or something.

White pushes at the cabinet. The old man helps. They only manage to push several inches - it is very heavy. White decides to just climb over it. He squeezes through, opens the door and climbs a set of dark stairs. Uncle Karl watches.

KARL
Don't trip over. It's dark up there.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

TIGHT ON a light switch - it is flipped.

AN ATTIC - full of books, boxes, discarded possessions. White picks up a book and opens it - the pages have been eaten out by a swarm of ROACHES. He drops it in disgust as the insects scurry over his hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In a small wooden box are several toys he examines with great interest. At the bottom of the box he finds a SMALL DOG-EARED DRAWING BOOK. On the cover is a colourful scrawl in child's writing - a title: ANSWERS - BY JONATHAN WHITE, AGE NINE.

White sits down and flips through the book in the dim light. Page after page is filled with neat handwriting and drawings. As he reads segments from the book he seems more and more disturbed. He flips through faster and faster.

HIS P.O.V.

Pages flip past, stopping occasionally. Glimpses of DIAGRAMS. The MYSTERY MEN and THEIR WORLD. Cross-sections of the MYSTERY MEN, the cavity in their head with the INSECTS INSIDE clearly illustrated. EVERYTHING.

PUSH IN CLOSE on White. He looks up, STUNNED.

INT. UNCLE KARL'S APARTMENT

White emerges from the attic, clutching the small book to his chest, lost in thought. He steps quietly into a hall-way - notices the old man putting THE PHONE back on its cradle.

KARL
John, I didn't see you there.

A NOISE O.S. White and Uncle Karl turn. A VENTILATION GRILL falls off a wall, revealing a hole. EYES shine from the darkness.

THE PUPPET leaps from the hole. It's blades unfolding, spinning wildly before it hits the carpet. It faces the two men.

KARL
What is <u>that</u>?

WHITE (to Karl)
Get back!

KARL
Filthy beast! Shoo! Go on! Shoo!

He wheels forward, attempting to scare the puppet off.

WHITE
No!

(CONTINUED).

CONTINUED:

The puppet goes for Uncle Karl. A whirr of metal, BLOOD SPLASHES ACROSS WHITE and the walls. Uncle Karl SCREAMS horribly.

White grabs a chair - holds it above him. The puppet turns from the dead man in the wheelchair. White lets it have it. The chair CRASHES DOWN, splintering into pieces.

The puppet is dazed, but immediately recovers. White has a fire-poker now. As the puppet advances, he swings, connecting with the creature, hurtling it across the room, into a wall. White runs out the door.

IN THE CORRIDOR

He leaps into a waiting elevator. Pushes the top floor button.

THE ELEVATOR SHAFT - The elevator moves upwards.

INSIDE THE ELEVATOR

White looks through the circular window in the door.

HIS P.O.V. - Floor after floor SLIDES PAST - deserted. He looks at the floor indicator. TIGHT ON NUMBERS lighting up: 86, 87, 88...

Then the elevator stops, the doors open, looking down a dark corridor. The PUPPET is at the end. It turns to face him, SUDDENLY RACES FORWARD, a horrible high-pitched shriek from its mechanical voice box.

White STABS the buttons of the elevator frantically, the doors won't close. The puppet is upon him. He JUMPS, straight up. It goes under him, CRASHING INTO the back of the elevator. White hits the down button one last time, and leaps out of the compartment AS THE DOORS CLOSE.

A MECHANICAL extendible arm shoots out and grabs White around the ankle. DRAGS him across floor. THE PUPPET shrieks wildly again, as...

ITS ARM - is JAMMED in the closing doors now. Lift descends. The puppet squeals. The arm SNAPS OFF.

White stands, pulls dislocated arm off his ankle. He can hear the elevator descending. Suddenly it STOPS - starts returning to his floor. White turns and runs again.

The lift doors BURST OPEN - the ENRAGED CREATURE emerges and races after him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He tears around a corner - finds himself in a dead-end. Nowhere to go. He can hear the puppet approaching along the corridor. Suddenly he notice A GRILL on a wall ABOVE HIS HEAD. He pulls it off, climbs into an incredibly tight pipe. Crawls frantically.

He sees a LIGHT ahead. An opening. He kicks the grill off. A sudden gust of wind.

HIS P.O.V.

The pipe leads to the outside of the building - nowhere to go except a hundred stories STRAIGHT DOWN. He screams, almost falls. Turns to start crawling back.

Suddenly the end of the pipe fills with WHIRRING METAL BLADES. The puppet has followed him in and is advancing.

No choice - he looks out the hole. SEES A PIPE o n the outside of the building, running vertically near the opening. It looks impossible but it's his only chance.

He climbs out, balancing himself on the lip of the opening, REACHES for the pipe. The puppet is almost upon him. He swings across, gets a HAND on the pipe. He slips, DANGLES - holding on -one hand on the pipe, one on the edge of the hole. The pipe is greasy, slippery, can't grip it.

SUDDENLY he hears a MECHANICAL CLICKING - TURNS to see the puppet standing on the edge of the hole, inches from his hand. A soft noise reverberates in its voice box - a mechanical giggle? A circular blade on one of its arms starts up, moves down onto White's HAND.

TIGHT ON HIS EYES - sweat beads and runs down his forehead.

TIGHT ON THE BLADE - as it cuts into flesh. BLOOD spatters White's face as he grimaces with intense pain. He can't hold on.

HE FALLS, plummets through space. Screaming.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A GROUP OF SURGEONS stand about BUMSTEAD'S MOTHER on her life-support machinery. The surgeons have face-masks on and are in deep shadow. The woman stares blankly, still in a coma.

IN THE RECEPTION AREA

BUMSTEAD looks up from his wristwatch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUMSTEAD
I can't wait any longer...

He is standing in front of the MALE NURSE in the glassed-in counter.

NURSE
I'm sorry. I told you, she is being examined...

He turns and storms off down the corridor. The NURSE stands, shouting after him.

NURSE
Mister Bumstead!

INSIDE MOTHER's ROOM

One of the "doctors" leans down and grabs a handful of WIRES leading out of a box beside the woman.

SURGEON
We will teach the pig to meddle in our affairs. Yes.

He pulls the wires out in a burst of electrical sparks - ALL THE MACHINES DIE. The woman comes to life momentarily, starts to claw at the glass shield in front of her face, like she is suffocating. The life drains from her weak body and she is STILL.

ANGLE ON THE DOOR - it bursts open. Bumstead is standing there. The masked surgeons are startled, they turn rapidly to face him.

BUMSTEAD (steps forward)
What is happening?

SURGEON
Ah, Inspector Bumstead! We are glad you are here - I'm afraid we have done all we can. Yes. Your Mother has passed. Yes.

Bumstead turns towards his mother.

BUMSTEAD
But she was getting better...

SURGEON
We are sorry. The cancer - it was fatal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Bumstead turns to the men, confusion in his eyes.

BUMSTEAD
She doesn't have cancer.

The men glance at each other for a moment, then back at the inspector.

SURGEON
We knew that. Yes.
(the other men nod)
Anyway - she is dead.

Bumstead leaps forward, RIPS OFF one of the surgeon's masks.

ANGLE ON THE MAN - He turns to look at Bumstead, pale skin, staring eyes, a MYSTERY MAN. TWO OTHER MEN grab him from behind.

BUMSTEAD (struggles)
I'll kill you all!

One of the Mystery Men steps up to the struggling inspector, places the palm of his hand across Bumstead's eyes.

MYSTERY MAN
You will obey us, yes. In your mind
there is a dark space...

TIGHT ANGLE

Bumstead's hand reaches out, fumbles at a tray of surgical implements, grabs a SCALPEL.

WIDER

He cuts into the hand of one of the Men holding him, SPINS AND DRIVES the scalpel into the forehead of the Mystery Man attempting to hypnotise him.

The other Men leap towards him.

EXT. CANAL - NIGHT

TIGHT ON WHITE'S FACE

His eyes are shut tight. He opens them, slowly LOOKS AROUND, curious why he isn't dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WIDER ANGLE

White floats in MID-AIR, hovering ten feet or so above a dark body of water. He looks amazed. Shuts his eyes, rubs them, opens them again. Still floating.

He clenches his fists and TENSES his body. Slowly he starts to MOVE FORWARD, hovering at an even height over the water.

WIDER STILL

SEVERAL ANGLES feature the figure of White levitating across the harbour, past half-sunken buildings and rusted ships.

TIGHT ON WHITE - He comes to a stop. Smiles in amazement. Then he suddenly plummets into the water, like a trap-door has opened beneath him.

ANGLE ON BUBBLES floating to the surface. White's FACE rises slowly out of the water.

WIDER - CITY SKYLINE

A SMALL OBJECT floats towards the ground at the end of a tiny white parachute.

BACK ON WHITE

He swims across to a small boat, climbs aboard, pushes himself silently through the still canals of the city.

EXT. HARBOUR

Oil tankers move silently through inky water.

White paddles the boat to the bottom of A PIER, climbs a rotten ladder. He runs off into the shadows.

BACK IN THE WATER

The PUPPET cuts through the waves, pushed along by a rear propeller. It reaches the pier, climbs to the top. The prop retracts, and the creature wheels forward slowly, onto a concrete surface. It looks around - it knows White is there somewhere.

PUPPET'S P.O.V.

A trail of WET FOOTPRINTS on the ground. It follows them, is led to a crane cabin.

CONTINUED:

INSIDE THE CRANE'S CABIN - is White, a lunatic grin on his face, at the controls.

A NOISE O.S. startles the puppet. It looks up.

PUPPET'S P.O.V.

Follows the crane up into the air. The crane is swinging around against the dark sky. A HUGE METAL CONTAINER dangles, stops above the puppet.

ON WHITE

WHITE
Nice knowing you.

TIGHT ON WHITE'S HAND - It pulls a lever.

THE CONTAINER - Shakes and starts to fall.

THE PUPPET - Screams up at the plummeting container.

WIDER

The container crashes into the ground, crushing the creature.

Silence. Dust floats in the air.

EXT. STREET

BUMSTEAD's running. He looks a mess, clutching a bleeding gash in his side, cuts on his face, clothes torn - but he made it out alive...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOF-TOP

BUMSTEAD sits on the ground, leans against a wall, breathing heavily - he's losing a lot of blood.

He waits.

A NOISE O.S. startles him - A FIGURE in the shadows across the roof.

BUMSTEAD
White?

(CONTINUED).

CONTINUED:

It's too big to be White. The man steps from the shadows.

STROMBOLI (walking forward)
Hello, Bumstead.

He's holding a gun, levelled at the inspector. Bumstead lies bleeding, against the wall. He points his own gun at the advancing man and pulls the trigger.

CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!

BUMSTEAD
Dammit.

Stromboli is upon him, grabs the empty gun, throws it away, picks up the inspector, leans him against the wall. Without Stromboli holding him up, Bumstead would not be able to stand.

STROMBOLI
Why do you always have to find things out the hard way! Couldn't you just do your job, you idiot? I told you, didn't I? These people are not playing games, Bumstead. They can do anything they want, don't you understand?

BUMSTEAD (a hiss)
You're one of them. You bastard...

STROMBOLI (laughing)
In a way, we <u>all</u> are, inspector! You. Me. Everybody!

Stromboli carries Bumstead towards the EDGE of the roof. He keeps laughing.

STROMBOLI
Time for that early retirement, Bumstead. Didn't bring the gold watch I'm afraid.

BUMSTEAD (weakly)
No... Please...

INSPECTOR'S P.O.V.

THE EDGE looms up - a long drop to the street.

EXT. STREET

White paces nervously through empty streets. He stops, to get his bearings, then turns and runs into:.

A SILHOUETTED FIGURE in a bizarre metal contraption on wheels. A skeletal hand reaches out to White, grabs his arm. An inhuman moan.

Terrorised, White pulls back.

FIGURE
Ahhh... it hurts!...

The mechanized figure trundles forward, pins him to a wall. A streetlight reveals...

DOCTOR SCHREBER covered in blood, encased in a metal framework covered in silver blades.

WHITE
What happened to you?

SCHREBER
I'm... being... punished.

The blades are connected to the wheels - they turn when he moves forward, metal cuts into his flesh, slowly SKINNING HIM ALIVE. A torture machine. Between screams of intense pain, the doctor speaks.

SCHREBER
I had to - ahhhh - find you... I...
I...

The doctor shuts his eyes, a trickle of blood runs down his face.

WHITE
What is it?

SCHREBER
We are... living in their dreams...

Schreber turns and rolls off into the night, screaming -BLADES SPIN furiously, peeling back flesh. He glances at White one last time.

SCHREBER
Insect... dreams...

EXT. STREET

WHITE is running. As he approaches the building he hears a scream -looks up to see a figure PLUNGE OFF the roof.

He runs over. Looks down at the twisted body. THE INSPECTOR moans -barely alive. White kneels by his side.

BUMSTEAD'S hand moves across to an expanding POOL of red beside him, traces an 'H' on the ground in the blood.

WHITE (reading)
Aitch?

The inspector seems to be dying, then revives momentarily, puts A MAP in White's hand, looks up at him:

BUMSTEAD
Gesundheit!

His eyes roll up and he GOES LIMP. White stares at the body, then:

WHITE
I didn't sneeze.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

The MORTICIAN turns off the lights in the main hall and steps into his office, sits down, pours himself a hot drink, turns on the radio, opens his comic-book.

A NOISE O.S. disturbs him and he gets up, walks out of his office, looks into the darkness.

HIS P.O.V. PANS around the empty morgue. Nothing. Decides to go back to his office. He turns and is startled by three MYSTERY MEN obstructing his path.

MAN 1
We are looking for the White victims.

MORTICIAN
And who the hell are <u>you</u>?

The mortician catches a glimpse of the shiny dagger Man 1 is clutching by his side. He becomes very scared.

MORTICIAN
Over there. Numbers eight to twelve.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THREE MEN look over to where the mortician has pointed in unison. Man 1 looks back.

MAN 1
Thank you.

A FLASH OF STEEL. The mortician's throat SPOUTS blood. He grabs reflexively at the gash and falls back onto the floor, DEAD before he hits the tiles.

The Mystery Men step to an adjoining chamber. Man 2 puts down a BOX he is carrying, opens the lid. A green glow oozes out. The other Men manipulate levers on a control panel on a nearby wall. Stainless steel doors open. Body-length trays slide into the dim light. SHAPES covered in white sheets.

Man 2 with the box removes a GLASS SYRINGE, filled with a glowing green liquid. He steps TO THE BODIES and injects each with the syringe, through the sheets. When he has finished he steps back, places the syringe back in the box. The MEN leave silently.

All is silent and still.

Then the shape beneath a sheet starts to SIT UP. Then another, and another.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

WHITE is running again, clutching BUMSTEAD's MAP.

CAMERA PULLS BACK AND UP

REVEALS the entire corridor. KEEPS PULLING BACK - until the view is impossibly wide - like a cross-section of the building he's in, a doll's house with the roof taken off. The TINY FIGURE runs, amidst a dark network of surrounding rooms and passages.

CONTINUE PULL BACK

White is no more than a SPECK - the hall-way stretches ENDLESSLY in both directions, behind and in front of the moving figure, through an infinite labyrinth.

WIDER STILL

We no longer make out the figure. The X-rayed environment resembles some intricate aerial map of the vast city - the corridor an ever increasing SPIRAL.

INT. ORNATE APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

White reaches the top of a spiral flight of stairs.

HIS P.O.V.

APARTMENT 'H' - a rusted metal letter on the door. White steps forward. He knocks once and the door creaks open, unlocked.

INSIDE

The rooms are empty, derelict, strewn with rubbish. Mould grows on the damp walls. A door stands at the end of a long empty room. He can hear the muffled sounds of SURF, SEAGULLS. White starts to walk forward, smiling. As he approaches the door he begins to feel colder.

He opens the door and looks out. A blast of SUNLIGHT - blue ocean and sky.

VOICE O.S.
John White...

White does not turn about, he takes a step forward, then another -and RUNS INTO THE SKY - A PAINTED WALL. He glances up at a small SPEAKER built into the wall - the SOURCE of the sea-side SOUND EFFECTS.

He hears the click of the gun being cocked behind him. Hopes dashed, he turns. ANGLE ON A MYSTERY MAN - a gun pointed at White's stomach.

MYSTERY MAN
There is nothing, Mister White.
Beyond the city. Never has been.
Unfortunate. Yes?

White is led into a pitch black room.

INSIDE

TIGHT ON WHITE'S FACE - In the darkness - he looks across to the Mystery Man standing beside him.

WHITE
How did you know where to find me?

MYSTERY MAN
We knew you would turn up here
eventually... Been waiting for you,
yes. Hoped you wouldn't make a
nuisance of yourself on the way...

(CONTINUED).

CONTINUED:

The Man motions with the gun for White to walk forward. As soon as White turns to do this, the Man slips from the room and shuts the door, cutting off any existing light.

A NOISE O.S. - some kind of machine being turned on - lights start to come up all over the room.

It's a normal, average-sized, living room. All the furniture has been removed and replaced with chairs, tables, podiums -an arrangement resembling an IMPROVISED COURT of law. In fact, White realizes he is standing behind some kind of witness box.

The apartment is devoid of people, though almost immediately a door opens to the side (looks like it would lead to the kitchen) and a series of figures step through. MYSTERY MEN.

All the MEN take up specific positions around the room, without uttering a word, but don't sit. One MYSTERY MAN opens a curtain beneath an arched entrance - beyond it, within a very small room, stand DOZENS OF PEOPLE, crammed shoulder to shoulder. The people stare at White silently - a bizarre gallery of spectators.

An eerie silence falls on the room.

The kitchen door opens again. White is shocked to see the VICTIMS WALK INTO the room and adopt positions in what is obviously the area for the jury.

The DISEMBOWELED CORPSE OF A WOMAN steps out of the shadows, pushing a pram. Her throat is cut, she is shrouded in a white sheet.

Within the pram is the BABY clutching its own head, with spine attached, under its arm.

Then the mutilated FREDRICK hops out, followed by the three brown blood-stained paper parcels containing what is left of the YOUNG BOY.

Finally, his WIFE and the JAPANESE WOMAN, still in passionate embrace, take their positions.

Another door opens - a closet. Within stands the figure we have only seen as a shadow - the elderly MYSTERY MAN with the cane. MISTER BLACK slowly reaches above him and pulls at a chain hanging from the ceiling - the light snaps on inside the closet. Somewhere, a long way off in the same building, a toilet is heard flushing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He is much older than the rest, carries himself with authority as he hobbles across the room to a raised podium, supporting his withered body on his cane. Looks like he will play JUDGE.

Everyone in the room now sits. Mister Black looks at White.

ANGLE ON WHITE - He starts to tremble, not so much from fear, but cold.

MISTER BLACK
Welcome.

White just looks at him, still clutching the small notebook called: ANSWERS.

MISTER BLACK
John White, you are to be tried for murder, yes. You wish to confess to these crimes now?

White is silent. He leans over and scratches his legs through the fabric of his trousers. They itch like crazy.

Mister Black turns to the assembled people.

MISTER BLACK
Very well. The testimony of the prosecutors. Yes.

TWO MYSTERY MEN stand and step across to a wooden easel. MAN 1 stands beside it, reveals a series of visuals, charts, etc. drawn on stiff cardboard. MAN 2 uses a pointer while he describes the evidence to support their case.

MYSTERY MAN 2
We will show that John White is abnormal, a menace to society, a dangerous sick individual, and that the court should have no mercy in finding him guilty and punishable to the extreme for his crimes.

MAN 1 places a large black and white photo blow-up on the easel. It shows White at the door of the JAPANESE WOMAN'S apartment, clutching a kitchen knife, covered in blood.

MYSTERY MAN 1
Exhibit A shows the accused leaving the scene of his most recent crime, yes. A photo taken by a remote camera planted by one of our agents.

CONTINUED: (3)

White watches in stunned silence.

A general murmur of agreement through the room as the point is made. Mister Black turns to the victims, nods his head slowly.

MYSTERY MAN 2
Exhibit B...

MAN 1 removes a small tape recorder, hands it to MAN 2.

MYSTERY MAN 2
Actual tape recording of accused committing aforementioned crime, yes.

He turns a switch, the reels spin slowly. A hush fills the room.

VOICE 1 (sounds like JAPANESE WOMAN)
No... Please...

A scream.

VOICE 2 (sounds like White)
Shut up!

Another scream. A ripping sound.

VOICE 3 (sounds like his WIFE)
John! Don't...

Another scream.

White is standing up, involuntarily, he can't listen to this any longer.

WHITE (a squeak, almost inaudible)
Stop it! This is a lie...

Mister Black turns to White. The Men testifying stop the tape and look at him also.

MISTER BLACK
Something to say? Ready to confess?

The Men in the audience turn and all stare at White, as do the victims and the spectators in the adjoining room.

WHITE (back to a whisper)
I didn't kill anyone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MISTER BLACK
Speak up. Yes.

WHITE (finds his voice)
It's lies. Everything.

He grips the barrier before him.

A SHRIEK from the pram containing the BABY - it rocks violently from side to side.

The DISEMBOWELED WOMAN rises from her chair. She has difficulty standing, her limbs stiff. She looks at White, opens her mouth to say something, but no sound comes out. Instead a tiny RED CRABS scuttles out, across her face, and falls to the ground. She sits down.

White is stunned.

MISTER BLACK
Bring the witnesses.

AN OLDER COUPLE are led out of the kitchen by a Mystery Man. Shown to seats behind a podium. The woman looks sadly at White.

MISTER BLACK
You are the accused's parents?

FATHER
That's right.

MOTHER
Yes.

WHITE
Wait a minute...

MISTER BLACK
You had your turn! Let them speak.

WHITE (angry)
My parents are supposed to be dead!
You can't keep changing the damn
rules like this! Why go through this
ridiculous set-up! Why don't you
just kill me and be done with it!

MISTER BLACK (smiles at parents)
Please, continue...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

WHITE
This is insane!

He looks over to the victims.

WHITE
It was them, not me.
(points at the Mystery Men)
They killed you.

Looks back at the Mystery Men.

WHITE
You have invented all this. History is a lie, not just mine, everyone's - a fiction. You are the authors.

His knuckles go white as he squeezes tighter on the barrier.

MISTER BLACK
A fanciful idea, Mister White.

WHITE
Everyone has a job - a function. Each one teaches you more about your invention. I'm what is called a murderer.

The whole court listens in silence to White's testimony.

WHITE
You've given everybody memories, but I missed out. The Doctor saw to that - played your own game. And now...

WHITE looks at the MYSTERY MEN, then back at MISTER BLACK.

WHITE
You're trying to get rid of me.

There is silence. Whispers. Faces staring.

WHITE
Why do I threaten you? You're scared aren't you?

MISTER BLACK and the gathered MYSTERY MEN look speechless at White. Suddenly everyone bursts into spontaneous LAUGHTER, led by Mister Black.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

A terrible cackle fills the room - all the MYSTERY MEN laugh hysterically, so do the mutilated victims. The spectators in the adjoining room remain silent.

MISTER BLACK
Ah - a plot. Now we have a plot!
(chuckling)
Very inventive...

The older couple behind the podium look disturbed.

MOTHER
Please, John, you're embarrassing us...

WHITE
Shut up!

MISTER BLACK (chuckling still)
You have proof? Evidence? Yes?

WHITE (holds up notebook)
It's all here!

Mister Black seems startled by the book, then pretends it's nothing.

MISTER BLACK
A book of delusions. Anything else?

WHITE
But I...

MISTER BLACK
I see.
(turns to the victims)
The verdict, yes...

WHITE
Wait, this isn't fair...

The DISEMBOWELED WOMAN stands again. This time she opens her mouth, there is a bubbling noise, water runs out, then:

DISEMBOWELED WOMAN (whisper)
Guil - ty...

White is agitated, fear in his face. Mister Black stamps SOME PAPERS before him repeatedly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

ON THE PAPERS - Official-looking documents. The stamp says: GUILTY.

CLOSE on White's eyes.

MISTER BLACK
Before I pronounce sentence...

Suddenly the papers on the bench in front of Mister Black BURST INTO FLAMES. Mister Black recoils, almost falling off his chair, taken by surprise. The Mystery Men all look at White, a murmur of concern.

Mister Black looks up at White - angered.

MISTER BLACK
How dare you use your tricks on me!

White, genuinely surprised, looks around. Several Mystery Men BACK AWAY from him, scared.

WHITE
I didn't realise...

MISTER BLACK
Shut up, freak! Monster! You are insignificant.

He glares across the room, angrily. An WOODEN CHAIR in a corner starts to vibrate.

CLOSE on Mister Black's eyes.

The chair rises into the air - HURLS across the room at White.

Mister Black laughs as it crashes into the wall. White ducks just in time.

The gathered Mystery Men erupt into enthusiastic applause.

White regains his composure and tries some mind tricks of his own. He lifts a small table into the air, and makes it spin -a knife and fork dance back and forth on the surface, as several plates (from a stack in the kitchen) hurl, firstly at the spinning table, then go flying across the room, smashing near Mister Black, making him dance back and forth comically.

This display is accompanied by a rousing rendition of a WALTZ playing on a floating gramophone White has also activated with his mind.

CONTINUED: (8)

SEVERAL Mystery Men are TERRIFIED. White is amazed at his own performance.

MISTER BLACK
You'll regret that.

Mister Black is furious, spluttering, spit flying from his mouth.

MISTER BLACK (shouts)
SHUT IT DOWN!

A Mystery Man by the window, picks up a phone and dials furiously. Everyone in the room remains silent - waiting.

MAN ON PHONE
Yes, we have a problem here. Shut it down immediately.

White doesn't understand what is going on. O.S. the SOUND of machinery WINDING DOWN.

ANGLE ON a clock hanging on the wall. ON the SECOND HAND. It suddenly STOPS.

All eyes are on Mister Black.

MISTER BLACK
This has all gone too far. Yes, much too far!

Mister Black starts to SHAKE. His eyes shut, clenches his teeth, grips the insect on his cane, plants his feet firmly to the floor.

Around the room WALLS CRACK, plaster rains down from the ceiling...

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

All over the city things START TO FALL APART - a devastating impact on the landscape.

MONTAGE

A street CRACKS OPEN. Beneath the pavement are pulsating intestine-like organs. These burst open with pus...

A building vanishes...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A car on a street corner flies into the air...

A telephone box STARTS TO SPIN, faster and faster, digging itself into the concrete. Monstrous INSECT LEGS sprout from the hole left behind...

Geysers of STEAMING BILE spurt into the night sky...

BLACK EXCREMENT forces up out of a sewer, runs down stone steps...

THE CITY is coming apart...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. APARTMENT 'H'

The room looks like an earthquake hit it - broken furniture and gaping holes torn in the walls.

Several MYSTERY MEN huddle behind an upturned table, watching WHITE and MISTER BLACK. They face each other, both still standing -mental energies focused against each other in battle.

The fighting is taken its toll on both men.

A DAGGER hangs suspended in mid-air, slowly rotating to face White with its shining silver blade.

Mister Black is clenching his rotting teeth, tightening bony fists by his side. Pushing every ounce of mental power at the knife.

White, bleeding from a gash in his cheek, is straining his mind against the knife.

The blade STARTS TO MOVE, ever so slowly at first, towards White. His body is shaking with his mental effort. A bead of sweat runs down his brow, dripping into his eye, blurring his vision.

He is losing.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

We see an OUT OF FOCUS IMAGE. A group of dark figures. WHITE regains consciousness, strapped to a kitchen table. From his perspective, in the immediate foreground, a figure speaks as he removes a syringe from White's FOREHEAD.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIGURE
Good as new. Yes. Everything is easier now.

His vision CLEARS, he can see. It's MISTER BLACK. Behind him a SMALL CROWD who turn out to be MYSTERY MEN.

Mister Black suddenly pulls at his own face, removes the mask.

Underneath is a mess of PULSATING ORGANS AND INSECT PARTS. This is what Mystery Men really look like. He laughs, starts to MOVE rhythmically - a strange dance-step. The others join in, as they too pull off masks.

Each Man reaches up to his left ear in unison. They pull squirming INSECTS out, hold them up to the light. The insects scream triumphantly.

White screams too. And he can't stop.

Everything goes BLACK. Then the sound of a key rattling in a lock. A door slowly creaks open...

INT. SEASIDE HOTEL ROOM - DAY

A P.O.V. enters a small room.

Dappled SUNLIGHT through a tattered lace curtain. A clock ticks on a wall. A cough O.S. from the corridor. A FAT MAN, talks as he enters:

FAT MAN
...it's small but clean...
(it isn't)
...and the view's nice.
(points to window)
Isn't it?

JOHN WHITE enters. He is haggard, eyes rimmed with red. He still holds the small black NOTEBOOK, tight to his chest. He stands in the centre of the room, looks up. Strangely, though the room is very small, it extends upwards several stories - windows sit at various heights.

White walks to the lace curtain, opens it with shaking hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OUTSIDE

A narrow street and at the end, the ocean. The sound of distant surf, he can taste the salt spray.

WHITE (without turning)
I'll take it.

The man behind him blows his nose loudly and turns to go, shutting the door. White puts the notebook down on a table near the open window.

LATER

White has fallen asleep on the bed.

He wakes, troubled. Stands and walks over to the sink next to the bed. He moves like he is underwater. The sea-breeze tugs at the curtain, draws him to the window.

HIS P.O.V.

Down the street to the small patch of sand between buildings. TWO FIGURES approach each other.

He pulls out his wallet and removes the torn photo of the woman, places it against the pillow on the bed. He sits on the edge of the bed and lifts his trousers, looks at his legs - nothing out of the ordinary.

White is disturbed by a TINY MOVEMENT in his coat pocket. He reaches in and pulls out a small, EMACIATED FISH.

Disgusted, he drops the fish to the floor, looks at the creature. White raise his foot. His heel comes down with a sickening SQUISH.

THE CAMERA MOVES IN STEADILY towards the notebook near the window. As the SHOT TIGHTENS we can read the title on the cover: ANSWERS - BY JONATHAN WHITE, AGE NINE.

Now a sudden GUST OF WIND blows open the book. The pages flicker past. Glimpses of happy things. A child's drawings of smiling people. The sun shining down on a blue ocean full of sailing boats. Fields of colourful flowers. Cute animals.

INT. LONG CORRIDOR - DAY

SOUND OF SURF, distant, muffled.

CONTINUED:

CAMERA MOVES slowly towards a door. The final door - no others beyond this. ECHOIC FOOTSTEPS.

TIGHT ON WHITE - His haggard face moves through darkness. He looks down at his walking feet.

HIS P.O.V. - White sees water, waves breaking, through the cracks in the floorboards of the hallway.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The cracks around the closed door are illuminated, white-hot, by the SUN outside.

ON HIS HAND - As he reaches towards the handle.

ON HIS FACE - As the door opens. A sharp line of light cuts across his features, as his eyes blink and water. The wind pulls at his messy hair. SURF NOISE is louder now.

REVERSE ANGLE - WIDER - OUTSIDE looking through the door, along a long wooden pier jutting out into a blue seascape. At the end of the pier stands the tiny figure of A WOMAN WITH RED HAIR. She looks out at the ocean, her back turned.

ANGLE LOOKS BACK at White standing in the open doorway, squints into the sun. Suddenly he looks relieved, almost happy for the first time. He steps OUT OF FRAME briskly - a weight gone from his shoulders. Everything is clear finally, he knows exactly what to do.

A voice recites names over a P.A. system.

REVERSE ANGLE

A TRACKING SHOT follows White, moves down the pier toward the woman. As White steps up to her, she turns and smiles.

WOMAN (indicates the sea)
Beautiful.

White nods slowly. He looks out of place in his crumpled suit. He stares out at the ocean. Seagulls fly over. Sun reflects off waves.

WHITE
Yes...

WOMAN
What's your name?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He looks at her. Smiles. Then, slowly, brings his hands to her throat.

WHITE
John... White.

FADE TO BLACK

CREDITS